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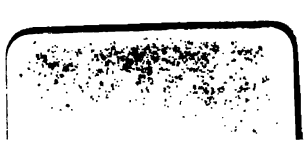


THE NAGGLETONS.

&c. &c.

" THE NAGGLETONS."

THE NAGGLE.

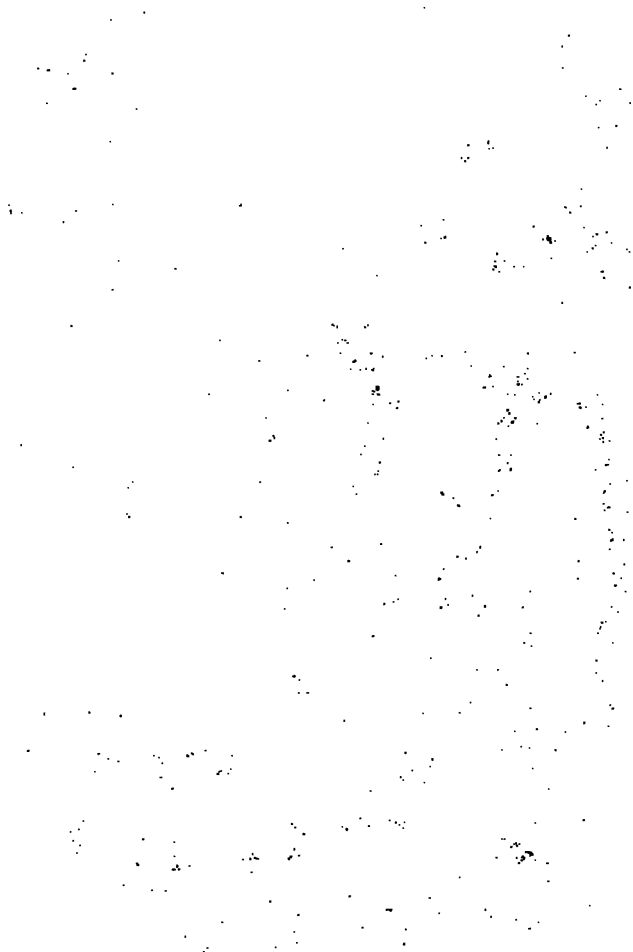
MCS [illegible] AND HE[illegible]

BY

SHIRLEY BROOKS

[illegible] WITH [illegible] AND [illegible]

LONDON
BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO., 9, BOUVERIE ST.
1875.



THE NAGGLETONS

AND

MISS VIOLET AND HER "OFFERS"

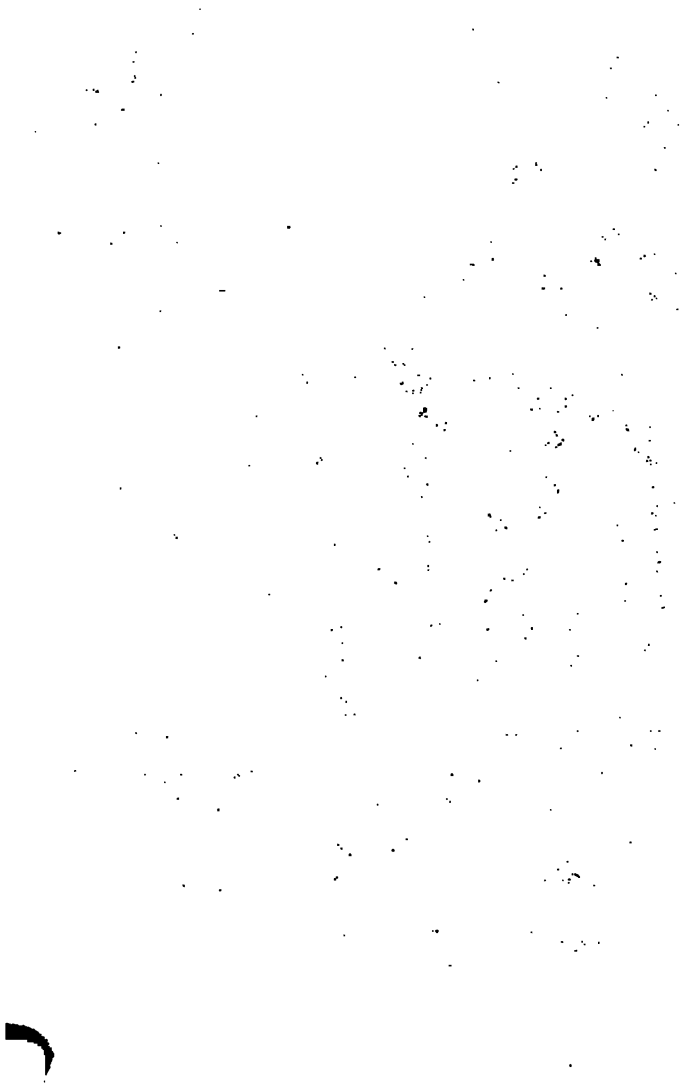
BY

SHIRLEY BROOKS.

UNIFORM WITH "WIT AND HUMOUR."

LONDON:
BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO., 9, BOUVERIE ST.
1875.

251. d. 104



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LONDON:
BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

NOTE.

THE series of papers called "The Naggletons" appeared in the pages of *Punch* between the years 1862 and 1865. Their Author had intended to republish them, and perhaps to connect them by a somewhat stronger thread of interest than ran through them in their original form. This was never done, nor was the promise conveyed in the last Chapter ever fulfilled.

"Miss Violet and Her Offers" appeared in 1852.

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THE NAGGLETONS.

I.—ON GOING OUT OF TOWN.

The Scene represents the Parlour, Hall, and doorsteps of a genteel house in the suburbs of the Metropolis. Various boxes, done up in white and corded, also portmanteaus and carpet bags, also a bonnet-box, and a bundle of umbrellas, sticks, and a fishing-rod, are disposed in the Hall.

Mr. Naggleton (*fussing about*). Now, Maria, it is 9 o'clock.

Mrs. N. (*looking as objectionable as a woman always does when she has a travelling dress on, no gloves, and a cross aspect.*) Well, what if it is?

Mr. N. Train starts at 9·40.

Mrs. N. That's ten minutes to ten.

Mr. N. No, it isn't.

Mrs. N. Yes, it is.

Mr. N. I tell you it is twenty minutes to ten, and we have got to get to the Station.

Mrs. N. You need not tell me that. Do you

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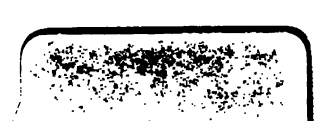

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self in that ridiculous way in the hope of seeming younger than you are.

Mr. N. (*thinks he sees an opening.*) No, my dear. I have given sufficient proof, in the later part of my life, of not being as wise as I ought to be, considering.

Mrs. N. (*carelessly.*) Have you, love? Never mind. It's too late for regrets now. But (*arrested in the midst of her victory, and angrily*) it's too early to begin smoking that abominable pipe.

Mr. N. (*availing himself of the enemy's indiscretion.*) I observe, my dear, that the names of things vary with the temper of the speakers. This is a pipe, when you are in a rage, but it is a Meerschaum, when you are going to fill and light it, preparatory to some little domestic manœuvre.

Mrs. N. A man who deserved to be called a husband would not make domestic manœuvres necessary, and a husband who deserved to be called a man would not reproach a wife with any little display of kindness. However, such a thing will not occur again.

Mr. N. In that case I shall lose on my fusees, and gain on my banker's book. Ha! ha!

Mrs. N. You are easily pleased.

Mr. N. Then you must reproach yourself with

not oftener trying what is so easy. Come, I was only joking.

Mrs. N. I am glad you mention it. I did not see the joke. Such things are not much in your way.

Mr. N. (*furious.*) A course of novels makes us critical as well as polite.

Mrs. N. Oh, there! I didn't say it. I'm sorry I spoke. I know that you are the wit of the "Flips" Club, only don't bring your wit to me, because I am unfortunately too stupid to be a good judge of that article.

Mr. N. Or of any other—potted beef included. This is the worst I ever ate.

Mrs. N. Here is the paper, dear. (*Takes it in at the window.*) Perhaps somebody else's ideas may be more amusing than your own. Just let me see who is married.

Mr. N. Inhuman satisfaction!

Mrs. N. (*scorning to notice such used-up rubbish, and reading.*) Ah! Helen Sanderson's wedding at last! Alfred has got his step, then. What a happy wife she will be.

Mr. N. Yes, and will deserve her happiness. I do not know anyone with such a sweet temper. She is always cheerful; always tries to make the pleasantest answer that can be made, and

looks happiest when she has done anyone a kind turn.

Mrs. N. And she marries a man who can appreciate those qualities, and who is worth pleasing. And how handsome Alfred Crowhurst is. He looks like a gentleman.

Mr. N. Yes, it is a very good imitation.

Mrs. N. There now, that is just like you. So spiteful. As if anybody complained of *you* for being only five feet four, and being obliged to wear a wig. Do allow good looks to other persons.

Mr. N. (*solemnly.*) I have told you repeatedly, Mrs. Naggleton, that I am five feet six—not, of course—ha, ha—that it signifies; but it argues a determination to be disrespectful when a person continues to repeat what is not truth.

Mrs. N. Well, you shall be six feet if you like, dear. As you say, what *does* it signify? And your wig's your own hair; and is there any other truth that you would like me to admit, while I am about it?

Mr. N. (*icily.*) If you have done with the paper, I shall be obliged by it.

Mrs. N. There it is. I see old Mr. Bloker is gone at last. She will be well off, won't she?

Mr. N. What, John Bloker! Dear me, I *am* shocked.

Mrs. N. Well, I don't know what about. It must be a happy release for himself and his friends. Mrs. Bloker will marry again, I dare say.

Mr. N. Why, she's as old as you are. Marry again, indeed! However, as there's no saying what folly a woman may commit, I make no doubt that John Bloker has taken care to fortify her weak resolution by some anti-matrimonial suggestions in his will. Goose as she may be, she is hardly goose enough to suppose that anybody would think of her except in connection with his savings. What do you think? (*The above charming speech delivered slowly, and as matter long since pondered.*)

Mrs. N. (*with a curious effort.*) Perhaps you are right, Henry. Indeed, I have no doubt that you are. I spoke hastily when I said—my dear Henry! Your Meerschaum is nearly out. I'll get you a match. But won't you come and smoke on the beach?—I don't mean about the smell in the curtains, dear, because I rather like that,—it seems so domestic—but it is so much pleasanter to have you with me, and you can read your *Times* just as well in the shade of the bathing machines.

Come, I won't be a minute putting on my hat, and as we go down, we'll call at Pickleton and Larder's for a moment, as I told them to get something which I think you'll like for breakfast—you don't half take care of yourself, and I believe I am wrong in leaving you to yourself so much, only you are so decided and imperious, dear, that I am always afraid to interfere. There—now you have a capital fire, and I won't be a minute. (*Exit.*)

Mr. N. (*smiling to himself.*) I believe that she cares about me a great deal, and that the thought of Mrs. Bloker's bereavement touched her feelings. She's not a bad sort of woman, though nothing like Mrs. Naggleton No 1.

[*Exit to wait at street door.*

Scene in another apartment. MRS. NAGGLETON *before the looking-glass.*

Mrs. N. If he has! and he is quite capable of it. As old as I am indeed! Well, it's no use talking, but ——

Scene Closes.

III.—ON THEIR TOUR.

The Scene represents the Interior of a First-Class Carriage. The distinguished Couple have it all to themselves, and are going from one Seaside place to another at an hour's distance.

Mrs. Naggleton. Of course you've left the keys behind.

Mr. N. Why of course? Because *you* always do? It happens that I haven't, for here they are. What else may be left behind I can't say.

Mrs. N. No, you took care to have business to go out about when you might have helped me in packing.

Mr. N. Yes, for the last time I made the offer, you sent *me* packing myself. Ha! ha!

Mrs. N. You intend that for some kind of joke, I suppose. It would be a very good thing if people didn't attempt what they don't understand. But because Wyndham Wareham says clever things, all the "Flips" club must try to imitate him, which is very pitiable.

Mr. N. I thought, my dear, that having (*ironi-*

cally) so many accomplishments, you could afford not to set up for a judge of wit.

Mrs. N. I know real wit when I hear it, and I know that it is very unlike the ridiculous and vulgar banter that passes for it at the "Flips," at least if I may judge by the specimens you bring home, though to be sure you may spoil them in bringing; likely enough, considering the state in which you come home.

Mr. N. There are so many counts to that indictment, my dear, that I will plead to the last only, and say that you never saw me the worse for what I had taken at the little social meeting that always excites your spite.

Mrs. N. I didn't say you were the worse. On the contrary, if you come home rather foolish, you are good-natured, and not much inclined to talk.

Mr. N. Your amiability, my dear, is an encouragement to me to persevere in pressing these little holidays upon you. A cheerful companion more than repays any trouble or expense she may occasion.

Mrs. N. I understand your manly and generous meaning, Mr. Naggleton. But I am neither vexed nor surprised. I require no new proof that your earlier life was not passed in good society. The idea that, in return for her railway fare, a

lady is to amuse you, is so essentially commercial that it would make one smile, but that the children are in daily danger of imbibing such lessons.

Mr. N. If they imbibe nothing worse than my teaching, Mrs. Naggleton, they will do no harm. I can't say as much if they imbibe what I have seen you giving them at lunch, namely, Burton ale.

Mrs. N. I believe that I am responsible to their medical attendant for their dietary, Mr. Naggleton.

Mr. N. Has your own dietary included a dictionary, swallowed by mistake, my love? Because you are bringing out the long words, uncommon, this morning.

Mrs. N. I can well understand (*smiling*) that you had no such complaint to make of the first Mrs. Naggleton. I think she spelt coffee with the same letters as cough, did she not, dear?

Mr. N. It's untrue. And whatever she *spelt* coffee with, M'm, she *made* it with hot water, which is a precious deal more than I can get her successor to do.

Mrs. N. Her successor should have been a kitchen-maid, my dear.

Mr. N. Well, in the matter of tongue and

temper, that might have involved no great change in my present happiness, my love.

Mrs. N. Wyndham Wareham must have given you quite a heap of his old sayings, which he has worn threadbare, and can't use any longer. Are they the perquisites of his followers? You come out quite smart in them. What a pity it is you forget them before company, and try nonsense of your own!

Mr. N. Ah, my dear, when we want to wound we shouldn't show that we are in a rage. Calm yourself down to your usual ill-temper, and you may be more disagreeable. At present you are a study—and I may add, thanks to sea air, a brown study.

[*Proud of his victory, he begins to read the paper, elaborately.*

Mrs. N. (*sadly.*) If anything should happen to you, Henry, I will try to forget all the insults you have rejoiced to heap upon me. But you will make that duty very, very, *very* difficult.

Mr. N. Indeed, love? Well, I promise you this. I'll try and postpone it for you as long as I possibly can.

Mrs. N. Yes, it is very well to talk so, but I assure you, Henry, the thought comes to me very often, and prevents my taking notice of many and many a thing which I ought to resent.

Mr. N. Deuce it does? You resent most things, and grumble at the rest. What was that station we passed?

Mrs. N. Tinkleby. Couldn't you read that? How your eyes are failing, and what childish vanity not to wear spectacles.

Mr. N. Vanity. Ha! ha! what have I to be vain of?

[*Meaning a bitter satire on his matrimonial acquisition.*

Mrs. N. (*accepting the challenge.*) I really don't know. And pride, which is a nobler thing, I do not suppose you are capable of feeling. I have read that it is much dulled by the instincts of commerce. Certainly Wyndham Wareham, your model, did say that you had reason to be proud of your marriage, but it is not for me to recal such expressions of opinion.

Mr. N. Well, strictly speaking, my dear, it is not, but their rarity shall be your excuse. And Wareham's so good a judge on conjugal matters that he has kept himself single, and means to do so.

Mrs. N. Ah! a joke redolent of spirits and water and tobacco-smoke, and would suit the "Flips" at two in the morning.

Mr. N. Your ridiculous animosity to that

harmless meeting is perfectly unaccountable, Mrs. Naggleton.

Mrs. N. Animosity?—no. But I regret that the children are liable to hear, through servants, who may learn it from tradesmen, that you are in that kind of society. I wish you could pass by another name than your own among such a set.

Mr. N. (*furious.*) Set! By Jove, Mrs. Naggleton, you talk as if you had been born in the purple—that is to say, to suit your understanding, as if your uncle had been a marquis instead of a man—

Mrs. N. The department of the medical profession more especially pursued by my lamented uncle, is one which can afford to disregard the scoffs of vulgarity.

Mr. N. Another burst of dictionary talk. Do you think it proper in a first-class carriage? If you cut your words in proportion to the fares, I should like to travel third.

Mrs. N. I make no doubt that in the third-class carriage you would find companions who would suit you. You might even fancy yourself at the "Flips," humbly listening to Wyndham Wareham.

Mr. N. That's about the tenth time you've

dragged in that man's name by the head and shoulders. What has he done to offend you?

Mrs. N. He? Nothing. I shouldn't speak to him if we met, for I think him a bad style of man, and though one rather likes anybody who is first in his way, it is really such a very small triumph to be first at the "Flips," that I cannot make a hero out of Wyndham Wareham. Perhaps I should, like you, if I looked at him through a glass of spirits.

Mr. N. I had thoughts of withdrawing from that club, Mrs. Naggleton, but I am now resolved that I will accept the invitation to take the chair at the next monthly meeting.

Mrs. N. Lor, why shouldn't you. I dare say you will not make much of a failure. I know Edward Clarkson took it, and they say did very well, and you know he is the greatest idiot in the world.

Mr. N. (*emphatically.*) No, Madam, he is not. That name belongs to a man who did not know when he was well off, but must needs—

Guard. Tickets, all tickets ready.

Mr. N. I gave them to you. Why don't you get them out?

Mrs. N. I shall get them out when they're wanted, and not till then.

Mr. N. (*angrily.*) You have no right to delay the whole train by your petulance.

Mrs. N. (*unmoved.*) Haven't I? But I shall, if I please. [*And she does please.*

IV.—AT BRIGHTON.

The Scene represents an Apartment in a Hotel at Brighton. MR. NAGGLETON *has put on his Hat and Gloves, placed the "Times" under his left arm, and his cigar in his mouth, and he now takes his stick, and is about to go out.* MRS. NAGGLETON, *who is reading the Supplement, has carefully watched all his preparations, but has abstained from speaking until he is quite ready to go.*

Mrs. Naggleton (*in an icy tone*). I want a cheque, Henry.

Mr. N. Very well, my dear, I'll give it you when I come in.

Mrs. N. I want it now, if you please.

Mr. N. O, bother, won't it do an hour hence?

Mrs. N. For the third time, Mr. Naggleton, your wife has to solicit money from you. If you wish her to request it upon her knees, you had better state that such is your wish.

Mr. N. (*throwing down cigar, stick, and "Times," and tearing off his gloves.*) How can you use such idiotic language? Why couldn't you have mentioned it before one had one's hand on the door.

Mrs. N. I am too well aware of what would have followed any allusion to the subject during your breakfast, Mr. Naggleton. I should have been insulted for not letting a man have time to swallow his coffee before dunning him for money.

Mr. N. (*slightly conscience-stricken.*) Where is that wretched ink-stand? You are always shoving it out of the way.

Mrs. N. I will fetch it from the bed-room. I do not regard a sixpenny ink-stand as an ornament to a sitting-room. I will fetch it.

Mr. N. (*venomously.*) Readily enough, I make no doubt, *now*. Yesterday, when I wanted to write a note, you had not the slightest idea where the thing could be, and referred me to the waiter who seemed on such good terms with me.

Mrs. N. (*piously.*) That a person calling himself a man should bottle up such trifles to reproduce them for the purposes of malice!

Mr. N. Never mind what I bottle, my dear; get the ink-bottle. [*Laughs.*

Mrs. N. (*sadly.*) Oh, dear! I know not which is worst—such seriousness or such joking. [*Exit.*

Mr. N. (*which shows wives that it is unwise to leave a man to his own reflections when money is wanted.*) By the way, what the deuce does she want with another cheque to-day? It's only

Thursday. I pay the hotel bills. I don't quite see it in that light. Any how, we'll hear.

Re-enter MRS. NAGGLETON, *with the ink.*

Mrs. N. There is the ink-stand, Henry.

Mr. N. I say, my dear, I move that this House do go into Committee of Supply.

Mrs. N. (*not having yet got her cheque.*) Just what I want, Henry. There is paper.

Mr. N. No, no, I've got my cheque-book.

Mrs. N. (*in spite of herself.*) You *have.* You had no packet by this morning's post, and last night you had left your book safely locked up in town. But I never profess to understand the mysteries of commercial matters. I have no doubt it is all right. Draw for twenty pounds, if you please.

Mr. N. (*evading the charge of fiction.*) This is Thursday, Maria.

Mrs. N. I am perfectly aware of it, Henry, and I deeply regret that your keeping me company here should deprive you of the happiness of attending at the "Flips." Had you not better go up by the 3·30 train?—you will be in time to applaud Mr. Wyndham Wareham's first joke.

Mr. N. (*now robur et æs triplex.*) This is Thursday, Maria, and you had a cheque on Saturday. Why do you want another so soon?

Mrs. N. (*briefly.*) Because the last is spent.

Mr. N. Unless you have any very special reason for wishing it, I should prefer not drawing until Saturday.

Mrs. N. As you please. (*Resumes seat and Supplement.*) That it should come to this!

[*Handkerchief demonstration.*

Mr. N. Come to nonsense, Maria. Can't a husband ask a plain question without a wife's turning on the water-works.

Mrs. N. does not speak, but the paper quivers with her shuddering remonstrance against his unfeeling vulgarity.

Mr. N. Now, don't be childish, there's a good creature?

Mrs. N. (*sorrowfully.*) Creature, indeed!

[*Heavy sigh.*

Mr. N. I rather suppose myself to compliment you by talking to you in a business-like way—letting you into my little confidences—but one never knows how to deal with a woman. There is the cheque, however, Maria. They'll cash it for you down-stairs.

Mrs. N. No, no. Take it back, and let us pay our bill and return to London by the third-class train. Ring for the bill, if you please.

Mr. N. Now what's up?

Mrs. N. O Henry, this is your mean way of acquainting me with your embarrassments, perhaps ruin. What is to become of the poor children? Pray, ring for the bill.

Mr. N. And a strait-waistcoat to follow. What are you talking of?

Mrs. N. If your affairs are in such a state that it signifies whether you draw for such a trumpery sum forty-eight hours sooner or later, we can have no business in a house like this. Pray let us go to London, and see what is to be done.

Mr. N. (*white with rage.*) Mrs. Naggleton, I do not quite like to say what I think you are, but certainly you are not a blessed wise person. What on earth have I said to justify such nonsense? I usually prefer to draw on Saturday because a good deal of money is paid in to my account on Fridays, (*observes* Mrs. N. *making a mental memorandum of this statement*) that is, on some Fridays—and so—

Mrs. N. O, don't take pains to mystify me, Henry. I told you I knew nothing of commercial matters, not even how a book could get out of a locked drawer and come to Brighton without hands. I only spoke for the sake of the children, of whom you never think.

Mr. N. No, of course not, except from ten to

six every day of my life, when I am working my hardest for them and their mother.

Mrs. N. (*humbly.*) I am sorry we are such burdens to you.

Mr. N. (*exasperated.*) Who the D, yes, a large D, Mrs. Naggleton, for the case deserves it—who ever said you were burdens? You have no right to charge me with want of heart.

Mrs. N. If I seem to have done so, dear, I have expressed myself unfortunately. You have heart enough, it is your poor head that is too often in fault.

Mr. N. (*At least twenty times more enraged with this imputation.*) I—I—am very much obliged to you, Maria; but your opinion of my intellect is, excuse me, not so valuable as it might be, if your own were of a higher order. (*Snorts.*)

Mrs. N. Recrimination, Henry, is ever the resort of irritability, but it is no argument.

Mr. N. Argument, indeed! No, I do not know that I am called to argue with my own wife as to whether I am a fool or not.

Mrs. N. (*smiling.*) No, dear, it is not necessary.

Mr. N. And, although your opinion on the subject is valueless, it may be well for you to know that it is certainly not that of my friends.

Mrs. N. I learned some lines when I was a little girl—I partly forget them—

Mr. N. (*also forgetting his manners.*) Not marvellous, my dear, considering the time that has elapsed.

Mrs. N. (*not swerving from the charge.*) They were something like this:—

> "No listening senate heeded what he spoke,
> But the club hailed him master of the joke."

To be sure you are not master of the joke where Mr. Wyndham Wareham is, but I daresay your friends (as you say) at the "Flips" would give you a character for a sort of smartness. I alluded, however, to real intellect; and perhaps as you do not quit understand me, we had better change the conversation. What a funny noise that man with bullseyes makes.

Mr. N. Maria, you of all women in the world!

Mrs. N. My dear Henry, I have no affectation, but you are always using the word woman. It is not quite the thing, and although it is natural that you should from your antecedents—

Mr. N. Hang my antecedents, Madam. Look at your own relatives.

Mrs. N. To see that you have studied grammar

if only for the sake of buffoonery is so gratifying that I abstain from further remark.

Mr. N. I was going to say, Mrs. Naggleton, that you of all *ladies* in the world are best entitled to deem me unwise, but that you also of all (O *ladies*) ought to feel bound not to use your privilege.

Mrs. N. Which means, I suppose, that having honoured me with your alliance, I am never to express my sense of some of your deficiencies.

Mr. N. I know of none.

Mrs. N. Ah!

Mr. N. But I know that many women envy you.

Mrs. N. Envy is always a proof of weakness of mind, and in this instance most particularly.

Mr. N. I tell you one thing, Mrs. Naggleton, in the old times my holidays were periods of unmixed enjoyment, now they are occasions of incessant wrangle.

Mrs. N. If the first Mrs. Naggleton had neither sense to perceive your deficiencies nor spirit to point them out, Henry, it is not my fault that I am successor to one who seems to have been but few removes from an idiot.

Mr. N. I wish there were more idiots in the world.

Mrs. N. (*points to beach.*) I daresay you will find plenty down there; at least it is about the

time the nurserymaids and that sort come out! Have you spoken to your friend the waiter about dinner, love?

Mr. N. I think I shall go up to town.

Mrs. N. (*smiling.*) As I was quite sure that you would not dare to be absent on a night when Wyndham Wareham is in the chair, I arranged to take an early dinner, and go round to Sarah Baltimore's.

Mr. N. You might have asked me first.

Mrs. N. I might certainly, but it did not occur to me to do so. Still, I can send Sarah a note if you find by-and-bye that you have courage to stay at Brighton with your wife, in spite of your friends and their sarcasm. Please yourself.

Mr. N. It being matter of perfect indifference to you?

Mrs. N. My feelings being matter of perfect indifference to you, I seldom trouble you with them.

Mr. N. Such is life? And what is marriage?

Mrs. N. Well, if you ask me, I should say it was—wedlock. Go and take your walk, and see if you can bring in a better definition, and, anyhow, bring in some better prawns than those you bought yesterday.

Mr. N. (*going out angrily.*) Cuss prawns.

V.—AT HOME.

That is to say, just at home. For MR. NAGGLETON, *as his wife had foreseen, did run up from Brighton to the meeting of the "Flips," and, as his wife had not foreseen, did, in an accession of midnight geniality agree to run over with* MR. WYNDHAM WAREHAM *to Paris for a week. He loyally apprised* MRS. NAGGLETON *of the fact, and promised to rejoin her at Brighton.* MRS. NAGGLETON *instantly came to London, and, on the night of the following interview had gone to a party. The scene is in the parlour at South Kensington.* MR. NAGGLETON *has been pacing the room for about two hours, occasionally smoking, trying to read, and looking savagely at the clock. At length wheels are heard, and Voices of the Night, and a huge ring at the bell.*

Male Voice (*of an extremely polite person.*) I have rung. Mind the horse, Richard. Don't get out till the door is opened, Mrs. Naggleton.

Female Voice. Come and see me soon, there's a dear.

Mrs. Naggleton. O, I will. There they come. (*Door opens*). I am so much obliged to you for setting me down.

Mr. N. (*viciously within.*) A pleasure I propose to myself, Madam, directly.

Two Voices. Not at all—most happy. Good night, *good* night. Home, Richard.

[*Exeunt wheels.*

Enter to MR. NAGGLETON, MRS. NAGGLETON *full dressed, followed by the housemaid.*

Mrs. Naggleton (*coolly as if she had not seen the hat, sticks, travelling bag, &c., in the hall*). O, you at home. You might have opened the door, I think, instead of giving Captain Silverdale the trouble of getting out on such a night in his dress boots. Carter, is the gas lighted in my room?

Maid. Yes, M'm, some time. I thought it would warm the room, M'm.

Mrs. N. I am glad somebody has some thoughtfulness. Take up the mantilla, and fan. I am coming up directly. [*Exit* Carter.

Mr. N. You will stop, if you please, Mrs. Naggleton. I have something to say to you.

Mrs. N. Won't it keep till the morning?

Mr. N. It *is* the morning, Madam. Perhaps you will look at the clock, and say whether you think this is a time for a married woman to be out without her husband.

Mrs. N. My dear Henry, it is her husband's fault, as he might have been with her. But I can't stand talking at two o'clock on a cold morning; besides, I am tired.

Mr. N. I also, Madam, am tired. I crossed to Folkstone this morning, hurried from one train to another at London Bridge, went to Brighton, and on reaching the hotel, found that you had been gone a week, and that my four letters were lying there. There they are, Mrs. Naggleton.

[*Dashes them on table.*

Mrs. N. Any cheques in any of them?

Mr. N. Certainly not. I gave you twenty pounds on the day I left.

Mrs. N. Then I needn't read them, I suppose.

[*Puts them into the fire.*

Mr. N. (*utters a word which not even the example of clerical novelists will induce us to set down.* Mrs. Naggleton *is about to retire.*) Stop, Mrs. Naggleton, unless you wish that my displeasure should be—should be *permanent,* Madam.

Mrs. N. I have no wish, except to go to bed, being tired out.

Mr. N. No doubt you are tired, Mrs. Naggleton. At your time of life balls till two in the morning are not particularly suited to your powers, but I dare say that you have strength left to inform me

why you left Brighton, and caused me to run down on a wild goose chase in search of you.

Mrs. N. Without remarking on the coarseness of your language, Henry, for I am really too fatigued to talk, I will merely say that if you had called at your place of business in the City—that is, if you have one, everything is kept a mystery from me—you would have found a note saying I was home.

Mr. N. I hastened down as fast as I could.

Mrs. N. Then don't abuse me for not having supposed that you would act in that schoolboy fashion. After staying away a week, you might have stayed the additional hour it would have taken you to call in the City.

Mr. N. This is my return for an endeavour to show you attention.

Mrs. N. My dear Henry, I take your intentions and all that for granted, and you need not have recourse to awkward demonstrations.

Mr. N. Why did you leave Brighton?

Mrs. N. Because I pleased. It does not suit me to be left at an hotel by myself.

Mr. N. I wrote from Paris to tell you to ask Mrs. Baltimore to come and stay with you for the few days I should be absent.

Mrs. N. Did you? I didn't have the letter, as you have discovered, and if I had I should have

done nothing of the kind. Why am I to pay Mrs. Baltimore's hotel bills?

Mr. N. You?

Mrs. N. (*unheeding.*) And after what you confessed at Brighton of the state of your affairs, I felt that it was not for *two of us*, Henry, to be spending money in travelling and at hotels. If you require that costly recreation, it is for your wife to make up for it by economy and self-denial.

Mr. N. If you *can* spoil my holiday, either when with you or without you, Maria, you do. Had I the slightest wish to shorten your sea-visit?

Mrs. N. (*in hopeless resignation.*) I—don't—know, but you took the most direct means to do it. You must be out of your senses to think that I should be staying at the Bedford while you are living at the Louvre. That is indeed what you would, I suppose, call igniting the candle at each extremity.

Mr. N. The Louvre! You might as well say that I had been at the Tuileries. We went to a quiet third class bachelor hotel behind the Opéra Comique, and dined at three francs. I saved so much upon the Brighton week that I actually bought you a ring with the surplus.

Mrs. N. As I detest Palais Royal jewellery, perhaps you will get rid of it in some other way.

I am not quite a baby, to be insulted for a week, and then to have my mouth stopped with a piece of paste.

Mr. N. What do you mean by insulted, Mrs. Naggleton?

Mrs. N. What I say. A man who leaves his wife under a false pretence that he is going to town for the night, and then skulks off to Paris without giving her the chance of accompanying him, may not be the sort of person to understand that he insults her, but if he has any respectable friends he had better ask their opinion. I could see what Captain and Mrs. Silverdale thought about it, though they had too much good taste to say anything.

Mr. N. Captain Silverdale's opinion of what is *due* to a woman is certainly valuable, for his first wife had to sue him for maintenance.

Mrs. N. The mind that delights in the reproduction of forgotten scandals must be indeed low, but I suppose such information is part of the advantages of your bachelor travelling.

Mr. N. Yes, and another part is my having been absent for a week from the grating influence of your incessant reproaches.

Mrs. N. Do not say that word, Henry. The time for reproaching you has long gone by—we

reproach only where we hope to impress. Sometimes in self-defence against unjust charges, I may venture on a word, but it is met with a violence which makes me shudder, and it is but seldom that I risk it.

Mr. N. I never used a violent expression to you in all my life, but by Jove, if you can't see that it would make any fellow angry to get no answer to his letters, and be made run up and down to Brighton for nothing——

Mrs. N. What is the fare to Brighton and back?

Mr. N. It isn't that, and you know it, a sovereign is nothing, but—

Mrs. N. Stop the amount out of the next cheque you give me for my housekeeping, and please say no more about it. I will gladly sacrifice some little personal comfort for the sake of a cessation of attack.

Mr. N. Such a cruel and unfair speech requires no answer.

Mrs. N. Being neither cruel nor unfair, it admits of none. How long have you been home?

Mr. N. Above two hours.

Mrs. N. And what train did you go down to Brighton by?

Mr. N. The three o'clock.

Mrs. N. Ah! Then with all your hurry you

managed to stay and dine at the Bedford, and I hope you enjoyed yourself. Perhaps you took Mr. Wyndham Wareham, and treated him, out of gratitude for his taking care of you at the Louvre.

Mr. N. I repeat, Mrs. Naggleton, that I never set my foot in the Louvre, and as for dinner, I had had nothing to eat since an exceedingly bad breakfast at Boulogne.

Mrs. N. Pray don't apologise to me. If I ever petition against the squandering of money I am instantly silenced by a fierce reminder that it is you who earn it. I suppose that the children will be brought up, or dragged up, some way, though I suppose I ought not to mention the children to a father who comes home and never even asks after them.

Mr. N. As if I had not seen them all two hours ago, while their mother was diverting herself at a ball.

Mrs. N. You don't mean that you have been cruel enough to disturb them at this time of night. Are you wild ?

Mr. N. (*triumphantly.*) The fact was you woke them all up with your ringing bells and calling servants, while you were getting ready to go out at eleven, instead of going to bed as you ought to have done, and they were all alive and

rejoiced to see me. Also, they were good enough not to reject some little things I brought them over.

Mrs. N. (*seriously enraged.*) Upon my word, Henry, you do not deserve to have children. I declare I never heard of anything so wantonly wicked in the whole course of my life.

Mr. N. Rather a strong expression, considering that you read the papers.

Mrs. N. Don't tell me, I don't believe that there is a single father in the whole district of the Seven Dials who, to gratify his own selfishness, would rush in and wake up a set of poor little children in their first sleep.

Mr. N. Ha! ha! No, my dear, not their first, but waiting for what would have been their second, if their mother had been a little less noisy in her eagerness to go out and dance among the other young people.

Mrs. N. It may be enough answer to your coarseness to say that I have not danced the whole evening.

Mr. N. I am glad that you—or partners—had so much sense of the fitness of things. I trust that you made a good supper.

Mrs. N. Yes, for Mr. Snotchley knows how to give a good supper, and is neither profuse nor

niggardly in the wrong place. He considers that half his guests are ladies, and arranges for their comfort, instead of thinking mainly of providing his male friends with the means of taking too much. It was a beautiful supper, and though its merits would have been lost upon you, I wished you had been there to take example from Mr. Snotchley how to attend to everybody.

Mr. N. Ah! dear man, and it is the more to his credit, as everybody makes a point of not attending to *him* when he gets on his legs.

Mrs. N. If you mean that he is too much of a gentleman to condescend to retail jokes, and to repeat prepared buffoonery, you are right: he has mixed with the best society.

Mr. N. Mixed what? Punch, or only grog? I know he was something in some Swell's household.

Mrs. N. He was tutor to an Earl and a Viscount.

Mr. N. I never expected to feel so much pity for the aristocracy.

Mrs. N. You may sneer, but ladies know how to distinguish between vulgar smartness and the highbred pleasantness of one who has moved in good circles. A lady near me said that Mr. Snotchley's manner reminded her very much of the Bishop of Oxford.

Mr. N. I don't know why it shouldn't, for Snotchley's father was a soap-boiler.

Mrs. Naggleton *considers for a moment, and then the effect of this climax of irreverence and vulgarity is too much for her, and she retires hastily.*

Mr. N. (*enjoying his vile victory.*) Well, the idea of likening that platitudinous ass to a splendid fellow like Saponaceous Samuel! but women are as great fools in their likes as their dislikes.

[*Exit, to get in a rage because his slippers have been poked away somewhere.*

VI.—ON MOVING.

The Scene represents the Distinguished Couple at Breakfast in their house at South Kensington.

Mr. Naggleton (*with the Times*). The news from America is interesting, but chiefly in a political point of view. The Democrats, who, as I explained to you—

Mrs. N. I do not wish to hear anything about Democrats. My Papa always said that they were low people, who wished to subvert the Altar and the Throne.

Mr. N. But as there is no Throne in the United States—

Mrs. N. Ah! that is just your vulgar habit of word-catching, which, excuse me, Henry, is quite apart from the manners of good society. I do wish you could take a little example from Mr. Snotchley.

Mr. N. (*going to be violent, but restraining himself into viciousness.*) I should like nothing better, for he is going to Brussels,

Mrs. N. Ah! Mrs. Snotchley is to be envied. She enjoys life.

Mr. N. (*maliciously.*) You can enjoy it precisely in the same way, my dear.

Mrs. N. I, Henry. No. I am not complaining—

Mr. N. That's a comfort.

Mrs. N. But to compare the pleasurable excitement of Mrs. Snotchley's life with my monotonous existence is perfectly absurd.

Mr. N. Comparisons are odious, my dear, and so is bad temper. But I merely meant to say that on the present occasion Mrs. Snotchley's pleasurable excitement will be derived from reading the letters her husband may write her from abroad.

Mrs. N. He writes beautiful letters, for he is a man of polished education, and it is delightful to read them. And it is very considerate of him not to drag her abroad with him in this uncertain weather.

Mr. N. One man may steal a horse and another is hanged for looking over a hedge.

Mrs. N. I have heard, that wise men make proverbs, and—those who are not wise men—quote them. I do not affect to understand your meaning.

Mr. N. No, there is no affectation about you, everybody knows that. I mean that Snotchley is praised for leaving his wife at home, while I was abused for doing the same thing.

Mrs. N. That is what a man calls an argument! The weather during your Paris trip was lovely.

Mr. N. It rained four days out of six.

Mrs. N. The Paris letters in the *Times* did not say so, Henry, but I have no wish to convict you of deceit. We have more important matters to speak of.

Mr. N. More important than my character for honesty and truth, Madam! What do you mean by that?

Mrs. N. Do not be so violent. Suppose the children heard you.

Mr. N. How can they hear me, when they are in their breakfast-room?—you talk nonsense.

Mrs. N. Wives always do, of course; do not the "Flips" hold that as an article of belief? But this wretchedly built house allows everything to be heard from one room to another, and that brings me again to what I wanted to say. Have you given notice to the landlord?

Mr. N. Notice of what, that we can hear through his walls?

Mrs. N. (*firmly.*) Notice that we leave his house at Lady-day.

Mr. N. Certainly not, because we don't.

Mrs. N. Henry!

Mr. N. That is my name, Maria. It was given me by my godfather and godmother at my baptism.

Mrs. N. I must leave the room, of course, if you indulge in such profane language.

Mr. N. Is that the way to speak of your catechism, Mrs. Naggleton? I thought you knew better things.

Mrs. N. Henry, be serious, if possible, not for my sake, I should not think of mentioning myself, but for that of the children for whom you profess some regard, and for whom, whether you care for them or not, the world expects you to show some consideration. It is unmanly to go off in jeers and jests when a wife is talking to you of their health and happiness.

Mr. N. You have said nothing about their health. As for their happiness, that shout of laughing—there it goes again—does not seem to say that they are particularly miserable.

Mrs. N. A child will sit up on a sick bed and laugh.

Mr. N. Yes, at a doctor like Peter Grievous, and

well he may. Now, are you going to quote Peter Grievous to me.

Mrs. N. Without discussing the wit of calling a professional man like Dr. Petre Gravois by a vulgar nickname, I hope a mother may remind you of what he said.

Mr. N. He said that Brompton was a relaxing air.

Mrs. N. He said that the air of South Kensington was relaxing.

Mr. N. Well corrected, M'm, and thank you. We are in Brompton, but as I call the place South Kensington to oblige you, suppose you live in it to oblige me.

Mrs. N. (*solemnly.*) I hope that I know a wife's duty. It is to accept the lot which her husband may force upon her, and to live, as long as she is spared, where his caprice dictates.

Mr. N. Caprice! Now that is—con*found* it, Maria, you have no right to say that. Was it I who insisted on moving here from Bedford Square?

Mrs. N. Yes.

Mr. N. Well, I am—never mind.

Mrs. N. Henry, it is well you abstained from adjuration. Let your own conscience tell you whether it was not you who insisted on moving

here, and whether I did not beseech for a house lower down.

Mr. N. Yes, at two hundred and ten guineas a year. To do you justice you did, but one of us was not insane.

Mrs. N. I am left utterly in the dark as to my husband's means, and it is manly in him to reproach me with having believed in his own accounts of his prosperity.

Mr. N. (*sternly.*) None of that nonsense, Maria, if you please. I put up with a good deal, but not with downright falsehood and injustice. We should have been simply mad to take that house. I took this to please you. Now, where do you want to go next?

Mrs. N. (*pocket-handkerchief practice.*) I have no wish, Henry. It matters little to me where I spend the remainder of my existence, and as I have said, it is my duty to remain with you. Let it be so, and do not give the notice. But I have also a duty as a mother, and I cannot see my children falling away under (*tremendous shout from the children in the next room, and clatter*).

Mr. N. Falling away under the table—go on. I hope Blinkitty hasn't bumped her head, though. (*Another shout.*) No, all right. Go on with your description of their misery, my dear.

Mrs. N. It is in vain pleading to hardened levity. I will merely say that if we remain here, I shall arrange to send the boys to Leominster, to their uncle, Emmeline to my cousin at Mold, and I daresay that Mamma will receive Cecilia. You need not look so alarmed—whatever pecuniary compensation may be necessary I will retrench from my own comforts.

Mr. N. Blinkitty shan't go to Mold, the boys shall remain at home till they are old enough for Harrow, and as for Syllabubs, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for thinking of turning her out of the house.

Mrs. N. It is you who turn the poor child out, and cast her on the mercies of—

Mr. N. Of your Mamma, eh? You did not mean that, old girl, but you've just said it. No, we'll not have Syllabubs brought up on ghosts and Calvinism.

Mrs. N. Mamma's persuasions—

Mr. N. Persuasions, no, by Jove. That's not the word. I don't think she wasted much time in persuading her children, especially if their ears were within reach. Syllabubs don't go there, and that's Medo-Persic, Maria.

Mrs. N. We will discontinue the conversation,

if you please, until I have had time to consult with my brother Cornelius.

Mr. N. While you are about it, consult him about a cheque he borrowed of me on Tuesday, and was to have returned the day before yesterday. Consult your great-grandmother! Well, if you and Peter Grievous say we must go, exeunt the Naggletons. Now, then, where are we to go to?

Mrs. N. Where you please, but in the first place, remember that our moving at all is all your own doing, not mine, and that I have offered to make every arrangemeut that would enable you to remain here.

Mr. N. I like that. And take away my children from me—what the lawyers call the rule in Shelley's case.

Mrs. N. Really, if you will attempt what you think wit, it should be new. You tried that speech before Mr. Wyndham Wareham, and he pointed out that you had made a ridiculous blunder.

Mr. N. You have a pleasant memory, dear I ask you where you want to live.

Mrs. N. I answer that it is for you to decide.

Mr. N. I know what *that* means. Well, I saw a bill up in one of the smaller houses in Russell Square. I'll look in as I go into the city.

Mrs. N. (*tearfully.*) The truth is breaking in upon me, Henry. I will bear it as well as I can, but a woman's nature requires some allowance.

Mr. N. Certainly, and yours is twenty pounds a week, not a bad allowance for any woman's nature.

Mrs. N. Yes, yes, and your incessant harping on that income confirms all my forebodings. You are going down in the world! Confess it to your wife, Henry. We women bear these things more bravely than you think, only tell me all.

Mr. N. (*in an intense rage.*) By Jove, if I were to tell you all that is on my tongue, you *would* hear something. What do you mean?

Mrs. N. There! I am calm, you shall see no more tears. (*Pockets her handkerchief.*) Now then. We must give up this house, you say, and retire into obscurity. And although you have not said so, you wish to save the expenses of a place of business. I see your meaning, dear. Yes, Henry, perhaps that will be well, and as Russel Square is in the heart of the city, your stock-brokers and silk merchants and all that sort of people could come there after you. I would give up the lower part of the house, but perhaps you would not mind letting them ring the area bell. Never be afraid to trust a wife, Henry. You

shall see how I will help you in retrenchment. I will give my canary birds to Hester Deedle this very afternoon, and the children shall be gradually brought to agree to part with Tatters. Give the notice, dear, and look at the house.

Mr. N. (*who has been turning several colours, but none of them pleasing to the eye, and who now speaks in a low, subdued voice, being afraid to trust his tongue lest it should bolt into the field of bad language.*) Mrs. Naggleton, there is one house which would suit you uncommonly well, and you may behold it, M'm, on the left side of the Brighton railway, near Reigate. It is called, Madam, the Asylum for Idiots.

[*He rushes out of the room, and bolts himself into what he calls his "study." Mrs. Naggleton, with a triumphant smile, takes out "Mogg" from the sideboard drawer, and placing the map before her, measures the distances between various places and one point to which she always recurs, a Terrace near Hyde Park Gardens. We wonder whether we shall meet her there.*

VII.—ON EDUCATION.

Scene—The Breakfast Table of combat.

Mr. Naggleton (reading a curious little note that he finds on his plate on coming down). "My der pappa will you Bee So werry kind to take Me and hedgar to the sologcal Gardings today. do if you pleese dear pappa so no More at presnt. From your afecnate Son Walter Nagleton." Upon my honour, Maria, at nine years old a boy ought to spell better than that.

Mrs. N. Just like you. Finding fault with the poor child's spelling instead of being pleased with his letter.

Mr. N. I am not pleased with his letter.

Mrs. N. You don't deserve to be a father.

Mr. N. There are several things that I don't deserve. But never mind grievances now. I consider that spelling disgraceful to a boy of nine years old.

Mrs. N. He is not nine.

Mr. N. Good gracious, he will be nine on Saturday next.

Mrs. N. And you remember his birthday. Wonderful!

Mr. N. I should like to know which of his birthdays I have forgotten, or yours either, which make rather a longer list. But do you defend that spelling?

Mrs. N. We do not expect orthography in a child of eight years old, and I think if he shows intelligence enough to write at all, and affection enough to express himself so prettily, his father need not set himself to pick holes in the poor thing's note.

Mr. N. I'm a brute, of course. And you wish him to go through life putting one "*f*" into affectionate?

Mrs. N. If he grows up like some people it is not a word he will often want.

Mr. N. Not if he writes autobiography.

Mrs. N. That is wit, I suppose. I should think you might find some other subject for your facetiousness than your children's welfare.

Mr. N. It is about their welfare that I wish to speak seriously, if you would let me. Walter's education ought to be taken in hand.

Mrs. N. I had always supposed that a boy's

education was his father's business, not his mother's.

Mr. N. That is too good, when you have doggedly opposed every proposal I ever made for having the boys taught anything. You and Peter Grievous together have made such a clamour whenever I suggested anything like teaching that I wonder the lad knows B from bull's foot.

Mrs. N. (*with a grimace.*) I hope, poor things, that somehow they will be taught enough to preserve them from vulgarity.

Mr. N. Well, I don't stand on the bull's foot. It was a phrase of the last generation. I retract the bull, and again I say that Walter, if not Edgar, ought to go to school.

Mrs. N. It was only the other day that you overwhelmed me with a storm of violence for hinting at such a thing, and you declared with the most shocking language that they should stay at home until they were fit for Harrow.

Mr. N. (*remembering the speech, and meanly evading.*) Maria, I insist upon your abstaining from untruth as regards me. I will *not* be accused of wilful and ungentlemanly violence.

Mrs. N. (*sweetly.*) My dear Henry, I do not say that it is wilful. It was always in your nature,

and is so habitual that you do not know when you are making yourself ridiculous.

Mr. N. (*with meaning.*) Yes I do, sometimes. (*Glances at a bracelet.*) But in the interest of the children let us speak rationally, for once. I ask you to look at that note of Walter's.

Mrs. N. I will take care that the poor child never annoys you with another.

Mr. N. You should be a better judge of what annoyance is.

Mrs. N. I am a wife, Henry, not a slave, and I am in the habit of saying what I think.

Mr. N. What you think will vex, you mean.

Mrs. N. If you are vexed with good sense, it is your fault, not mine.

Mr. N. I am not, but with spiteful nonsense.

Mrs. N. That you never hear from me. I do not know, of course, what sort of company you keep elsewhere. The friends whom you made by your first marriage might, I should think, have hardened you for that sort of talk.

Mr. N. You know nothing of them.

Mrs. N. And have no desire to know anything.

Mr. N. Ah! One might think Walter and Edgar were children by my first marriage, to see the way in which they are neglected.

Mrs. N. A mother can despise such a wicked

imputation. If you could be cool for a moment, and permit me to speak, I would tell you that I have been consulting Mr. Snotchley about the children.

Mr. N. And why should you consult that prig?

Mrs. N. That prig, as you coarsely call him, has had the superintendence of the education of children of first-rate persons, and his advice must therefore be valuable.

Mr. N. I am not a first-rate person, and his advice may go—(*rather ashamed of himself*)—may go where it is wanted.

Mrs. N. (*looks at him, but for once makes a golden bridge for a flying enemy.*) You cannot be so cruel, Henry, as not to desire that your children should be brought up better than you have been.

Mr. N. (*taking the bridge.*) Well, in some senses, I do desire it. But I should not like them to be Snotchleys.

Mrs. N. They might be worse.

Mr. N. Yes, they might be like his children, who are the most insufferable little puppets I ever wished at Jericho. Would you like to see Edgar standing on the table after dinner, reciting *Paradise Lost?*

Mrs. N. Yes, if he would recite it like Augustus Snotchley.

Mr. N. Then I should not. I'd rather see him lie on the table on his stomach, like Walter, reading *Chevy Chase* in that peculiarly comfortable attitude.

Mrs. N. Your prejudices against the man make you utterly unjust. He had no object in the advice he gave me.

Mr. N. I'll tell you about that when I hear what it was.

Mrs. N. He recommended that the boys should not be sent to school.

Mr. N. Well, he doesn't keep one, certainly.

Mrs. N. I should be ashamed of such paltriness, Henry. He says that the schools about here are not the thing.

Mr. N. What thing? The thing his notion of a school would be, silver forks, and parsing out of the *Peerage?*

Mrs. N. Even if it were so, no child is the worse for knowing the names of the aristocracy.

Mr. N. No, for when he gets into business, he'll be better able to avoid discounting their bills.

Mrs. N. As I believe our boys are not going into business, that radical and unjust sneer is quite beside the question.

Mr. N. There are some very good schools

round here. Charles Helston was saying so the other morning on the top of the bus.

Mrs. N. (*almost sublimely.*) And you would send a child to a school recommended on the top of an omnibus!

Mr. N. Ha! ha! ha! I can't be angry with you, my dear, in the face of such a noble sentiment. Yes, Helston says that there's a capital school round here in Rockton Grove—Allaby, I think, was the name, but you can send and ascertain particulars.

Mrs. N. (*sarcastically.*) I need not send far. The younger children of Rhatany, the chemist, go there. I know that for a fact.

Mr. N. A very good recommendation. Rhatany is a very clever man, and would certainly not send his children where they would not be well taught and treated.

Mrs. N. Thank you, Henry. I have no wish that *my* children should come home smelling of rhubarb and magnesia. If I can give them nothing else, I will give them the education of gentlemen. Perhaps you would like to ask Mr. Rhatany to dinner?

Mr. N. I should, dev—I should like very much, only he'd be bored with such talk as is mostly heard here. Rhatany attends lectures by

Faraday and Owen, and might not much care for Dundrearyism. But if Allaby won't do for you and the Duke of Snotchley, there's another good school, not much farther—the Reverend Mr. Pipus's.

Mrs. N. The name would be enough, but are you aware that the *Reverend* Mr. Pipus, as you call him, is a Dissenter?

Mr. N. That's truly awful. But as Dissenters do not, for being so, as yet come under the actual operation of the criminal law, I think we might inquire whether the monster has any redeeming points.

Mrs. N. Henry, I know well your levity on all serious matters, but here my duty compels me to speak. My children shall be gentlemen and Christians.

Mr. N. Pipus took honours at Cambridge.

Mrs. N. The more shame for Cambridge, Henry, to allow such things, but you know that it was always considered a low College.

Mr. N. Was it, dear? I didn't know. But if you say so, that settles Pipus, though he wrote a crushing answer to *Essays and Reviews*.

Mrs. N. I may not approve of that work, but it is like Mr. Pipus's impertinence, living in a back street at Brompton—

Mr. N. (*maliciously.*) South Kensington, dear.

Mrs. N. To take upon himself to answer the clergy of the Establishment. I will not send the boys to be brought up as infidels and revolutionists.

Mr. N. (*gravely.*) I don't know that I exactly wish it. What have you to propose, then?

Mrs. N. Any proposal of mine will of course be met with outcry and scoff.

Mr. N. Never mind, make one, and be a martyr.

Mrs. N. I think that a tutor might come in and instruct Walter and Edgar for a few hours in the day.

Mr. N. A private tutor. Hm. I hear the voice of Snotchley.

Mrs. N. Certainly it was his advice. I have no one else to ask counsel from.

Mr. N. You're very good. Suppose *I* give you a little without being asked.

Mrs. N. *Pray* do.

Mr. N. You are a very highly educated wo—no, lady—you can't deny that, for you have told me so a million times, and besides, there are your translations from Cary's *Dante*—no, I really beg your pardon, from *Dante*—elegantly written out in the green and gold album to testify to your abilities.

Mrs. N. Pray go on. When a husband begins to praise, a wife should look out for an insult that is seldom far off.

Mr. N. Lord Rosse's telescope wouldn't show you one in this case, my dear. I was merely about to say that suppose *you* were to become the tutor, and take the boys in hand for a bit. You've handsome eyes, Maria, but you need not open them so very wide.

[*Mrs. N. is unable to speak, but rises from the table.*

Mr. N. (*taking base advantage of her helplessness.*) You've nothing else to do, you know, at least in the mornings. Teach 'em from eleven to two. It would be a delightful recreation for you.

Mrs. N. (*solemnly.*) Henry! Let this subject be dropped between us for ever. There are limits to the endurance of a wife. [*Exit.*

Mr. N. (*in dastardly exultation at her slip of the tongue.*) Yes, she *is* sometimes unendurable. Ha! ha! [*Exit the brute, actually chuckling.*

VIII.—AFTER DINNER.

A Dinner Party, given by the distinguished couple, is over, and the NAGGLETONS *have descended to the dining-room.* MR. NAGGLETON *is lighting a cigar, and preparing to have, as he says, one quarter of an hour's comfort.*

Mrs. Naggleton. I think you might take that cigar into the library, Henry, if you are unable to go to bed without smoking. *I* would not be the slave to a habit, were I a man.

Mr. N. (*shortly.*) There is no fire in what you are pleased to call the library.

Mrs. N. (*perceiving that this fortification is impregnable.*) Then I will go to bed. I suppose that a wife ought to be driven from her own dining-room.

Mr. N. (*who has had some of the wine he has been hospitably imparting.*) There was a time when the cigar was pronounced rather an ornament to the masculine lip, and when its flavour was declared to be rather pleasant than otherwise, "but those days have passed, *Climanthe.*"

Mrs. N. What an unmanly memory you have! Throwing into one's face any casual expression of years gone by. At any rate, I never said that a dining-room ought to smell like a public-house parlour.

Mr. N. I have accused you of no such vulgarity, my dear. The dinner went off tolerably well, all things considered.

Mrs. N. All guests considered, you had better say. But of course I never expect a civil word in return for my trouble in such matters.

Mr. N. (*blandly.*) I didn't know you had taken any, or my acknowledgments should have been ready. I had credited our respected neighbour, the pastry-cook, with the merit of the achievement. Accept my apologies; and as you *are* near the—the—if I might name it, perhaps you would push the bottle this way.

Mrs. N. It seems to me that you have had enough of that kind of thing. I should like to see Mr. Snotchley coming back into the room after a party, and beginning to drink by himself.

Mr. N. So should I, because it would show that he wasn't quite the prig I consider him. But to do him justice, he did it to my claret to-night.

Mrs. N. I think that it was very kind of him

to stay five minutes after the ladies had retired, considering the sort of conversation which Mr. Wyndham Wareham chose to set going, and which of course you must help on.

Mr. N. I am sure, my dear, that not a syllable was said the whole evening that a bishop might not have heard with a—a hierarchical smile.

Mrs. N. Henry, you ought not to speak of bishops when you can hardly speak at all, it is perfectly wicked. And how can you say that the conversation was harmless, when Mr. Wareham was making jokes about Earls, and if he did not know that Mr. Snotchley had been tutor in an Earl's family, good taste ought to have made you restrain such talk at your own table.

Mr. N. Goodness me, Wareham only spoke of one idiot of an Earl. Was Snotchley tutor to the whole peerage, and answerable for all its absurdities?

Mrs. N. Of course, you meet what I say by violence, and I have done. And now that Christmas has quite gone by, and all the return dinners have been given, I hope that you mean to stop asking people whom I don't want to see here.

Mr. N. (*solemnly.*) Christmas being over, let us put away all Christmas feelings until next December—put 'em away in a drawer, my dear,

carefully locked up with the *Whole Duty of Man*. Now, for the world again.

Mrs. N. It is waste of time listening to the nonsense of a man who has taken too much wine.

Mr. N. I haven't. I am as comfortable as I can be under the difficult circumstances of the situation.

Mrs. N. O, I am not going to stay and disturb you. I hope you noticed your *friend*, Mrs. Woodcock, looking at the table, and making private notes of the electro-plate.

Mr. N. Admiring your good sense, my dear.

Mrs. N. I want no admiration from such people. I declare I turned quite hot when I saw her impertinence.

Mr. N. I wish those côtelettes had imitated you. They wouldn't have been bad if they hadn't been cold.

Mrs. N. And it was so necessary for you to tell everybody that they were cold. Imagine the master of a house taking pains to point out the faults of his own table! If you had held your tongue, nobody would have known it, except those who happened to take a côtelette.

Mr. N. When I tell you that one of the persons who were going to take one was Snotchley, I am

sure you will be enchanted that I saved that seraphic man from an unpleasantness.

Mrs. N. He would have been too much of a gentleman to have shown that it was cold.

Mr. N. Perhaps so—he's a jolly old hypocrite —let me, to be exact, withdraw the first adjective. Your health, my dear, and congratulations on the successful banquet.

Mrs. N. Much to be satisfied about, certainly. Giving a dinner to a heap of people one cares nothing about, and only two of whom will ever give me a sandwich in return.

Mr. N. Don't be cynical. Look at it through the purple light of claret, and confess that we have had a pleasant evening.

Mrs. N. I shall confess nothing of the kind. A pleasant evening to me is either one at which I am amused, or by which something is gained.

Mr. N. We'll place this in the first cat'gory. (*Coughs, and feels that he has really had one glass too much.*) Yes (*slowly*) in the first category. We have been amused—we have laughed, I have laughed—thou—thou hast laughed, everybody has laughed. Even the acidulated drop of Snotchliness was moved to a smile at the American story of Wareham's, about the owl and the preacher.

Mrs. N. He was too well bred not to smile, but I could see that he was not accustomed to that kind of thing, and I am sorry that you asked him to meet Mr. Wareham.

Mr. N. If I am sorry, it is for Wareham's sake, who must think him an unmitigated bore. But now, didn't your sister-in-law come out for the amusement of society?

Mrs. N. I wish that you would not call Mrs. Charping my sister-in-law. She is no such thing, and I am not ambitious of being related to a person who tells French anecdotes across a dinner-table.

Mr. N. Why not, if they are good ones?

Mrs. N. I believe that I am not an uneducated person, Henry, and I may be allowed to say that no French anecdote is entirely unobjectionable.

Mr. N. She had it from a clergyman.

Mrs. N. She said so.

Mr. N. Charitable!

Mrs. N. Charity begins at home, where I want no stories of that kind.

Mr. N. Ah! I wouldn't impute motives, but I notice that you never care to air your excellent French accent when Julia Charping is here.

Mrs. N. I flatter myself I know as much about French as Mrs. Charping.

Mr. N. Flattery is condemned by the rules of society and the ethics of the moralist.

Mrs. Do, Henry, put in that stopper, and go to bed. You do not know what nonsense you are talking.

Mr. N. I do, quite well. It is the playful corcorcations, at least coruscations of the midnight Aurora, pleasing after the brilliancy of the day.

Mrs. N. I only wish you could see yourself in such a condition. Thank goodness, the children and servants are all gone to bed.

Mr. N. "And leave the world to darkness and to me."

Mrs. N. O, it's no use talking to you.

Mr. N. Never mind that, if you are a true wife. Go on just as if it was. I assure you I am not angry with you, Maria. Angry with the wife of my bosom for telling me unwholesome truths?—perish the thought, or be it banished to the gates of Jericho and the ends of the earth.

Mrs. N. That it should come to this!

Mr. N. (*radiantly.*) What should it come to, a dinner-party I mean. To a jolly kind of evening, and after all, the sweet hour of conjugal confidence and unrestrained domesticity. "When we meet with champagne and a chicken at last," as Lady Mary has it. I say—(*daringly yet per-*

suasively) you are not exactly a chicken, but let us have a pint of champagne—just one pint—and so crown the festive night. Eh! There's some up, I know.

Mrs. N. (*awfully.*) Henry, shall the page sit up with you.

Mr. N. The Page! Buttons! The idea is amusing. I should look like *Brutus* and the *Boy* in *Julius Cæsar*. Does Buttons play the harp? I doubt it, unless the harp of the nation once dominoes in Palestine, at least dominant—

Mrs. N. Henry! [*Exit.*

Mr. N. The end of *Faust*, by Jove! A female voice is heard—"Henry, Henry!" I come, *Grimalkin!* Thou marshallest me the way that I was going.

[*Gets up to his room somehow, and we hope that nobody will ever again be angry with* Mrs. Naggleton *after what she has undergone to-night.*

IX.—ON A PARTY.

The Distinguished Couple have moved, as was predicted, and MRS. NAGGLETON *is the mistress of a house near Hyde Park Gardens.—Breakfast.*

Mr. Naggleton (*who has been moving his chair about twenty times, and putting his newspaper before him, and to his right, and to his left, and growling unpleasantly*). Confound this room, there's no seeing in it! (*Goes and pulls up the blind, frantically, to the very top, and resumes his seat with an angry look of defiance to the world in general, and the Park in particular.*) I wished we had stayed where we were.

Mrs. N. (*sweetly.*) My dear Henry, when elderly gentlemen find their eyes failing them, they should buy spectacles, instead of going into ridiculous rages.

Mr. N. Eyes failing—nonsense. Eyes don't fail in six weeks. I could see to read very well at Brompton.

Mrs. N. You will soon get used to this room, dear. You did not like South Kensington at first.

Why be so impatient? Let me give you some hot coffee.

Mr. N. (*Well, we can't print all that his abominably suspicious look, behind the Times, meant, but he had noticed that he was receiving pleasant speeches, and had not even heard a word about the blind, so he prepared for the worst, took the hot coffee, and went on reading*).

Mrs. N. Any news of interest, dear?

Mr. N. (*beginning to be frightened.*) No, nothing, at least nothing you would call interesting—no murders, Cresswell isn't sitting, and the reviews are not of novels, only history or some such rubbish.

Mrs. N. Nothing about that dreadful American War?

Mr. N. Lor! Did you know the Americans were fighting?

Mrs. N. Why, Henry, didn't I hear you explaining the whole story of the War very clearly to the children the other night? Do you think I do not listen to what you say?

Mr. N. (*Wishes he were out of the house.*) No, there is nothing important—two or three battles, and about nine hundred thousand killed in each, at least so the American papers say—but there is nothing reliable.

Mrs. N. Is reliable a good English word, Henry? Mind, I don't say it isn't, and I really ask for information, as I know you are rather strong in grammatical matters.

Mr. N. (*calm, but pale.*) No, it is not a good word, but we are adopting it, and so I suppose it must be recognised.

Mrs. N. Thank you. I must remember to use it with a protest when I am writing to Mrs. Baltimore, though she will be sure to know that I got the hint from you, and sneer accordingly.

Mr. N. I shouldn't trouble myself with such an amiable correspondent.

Mrs. N. Well, of course I don't write out of any particular regard for her, but I must get out of her what day she is going to fix for her Party.

Mr. N. If she asks *you*, I suppose she'll mention it. I believe that formality is usual, unless any new-fangled rule prevails in these aristocratic regions.

Mrs. N. Yes, dear, but I don't want to wait for that. I want to send out my own invitations to-morrow at latest.

Mr. N. (*sees it all.*) This is the first I have heard of any such nonsense, and I should like it to be the last.

Mrs. N. And so it will be, Henry. I am sure

that you have had no trouble when I have asked a few friends, and I should not think it fair, when you have so much upon your mind, that you should be pestered with any trifles. Except that you may like to see the list, you shall hear nothing more about it until you come home to dress on the evening.

Mr. N. The whole thing is outrageous. We scarcely have been in the house a month.

Mrs. N. (*unguardedly.*) You said six weeks just now.

Mr. N. I don't care what I said. I say we have hardly had time to turn ourselves round in the house before you want to turn it out of windows.

Mrs. N. What a way of talking, as if you were some two-penny lawyer's clerk in Tottenham Court Road, who has to pull down the beds, and take off the doors for supper-tables when he wants to see his friends. These houses are expressly built to give parties in, and you won't know three hours before or after that there has been anything of the kind.

Mr. N. But what the deuce is the use of anything of the kind, as you call it. What do we want to give parties for?

Mrs. N. I really can't answer such nonsense as

that. If you don't mean to live as other people do, you had better not have come here, but have taken a hut in Wales or some such place.

Mr. N. Ha! It may come to that, *nolens volens*, if you follow up your wise notion of doing as other people do.

Mrs. N. You have said that kind of thing so often, Henry, that it has lost its effect with me. A man who can send twenty pounds to a Lancashire fund can perfectly well afford to do what is necessary to maintain his own position in society —*or ought to be able.*

Mr. N. Your favourite clergyman informed us, last Sunday, that a mere sacrifice of superfluity was no charity, and that we ought to give up our own pleasures for the sake of helping distress.

Mrs. N. You had better keep away from church if you can go there for no better purpose than to distort what is said, and to pretend you are told to make charity a plea for meanness. Besides, as you say you do not consider a party any pleasure, I don't see how you can affect to be making any sacrifice.

Mr. N. (*would like to laugh at this ingenious way of putting it, but masters himself and continues the fight.*) Will you give me one rational reason for cramming these rooms with a heap of

people we don't care about, and for wasting a lot of money on a supper? Do *you* want to dance?

[*Looking chronology at her.*

Mrs. N. (*who decidedly means to dance, if asked, but who scorns reply to such a question.*) If friends are to be made for the children—

Mr. N. Come, come. Let *them* alone. The children are to the mistress of a house what the cat is to a lodging-house keeper—an excuse for everything. Your eldest child is not ten, and has nothing to say to a party that begins at eleven. If you don't pledge yourself that they shall all be in bed two hours before anybody comes, I declare at once that the party shall not be given. Now!

Mrs. N. (*too genteel to think of a sprat and a salmon, but nevertheless.*) My dear Henry, you are the master in your house, and I do not say that the children ought to be kept up, though I should, I own, just like them to be seen, but I feel you are right. They shall all go to bed.

[*Considers which morning she will be able to spare to take them to Swears's, and arrange their costume for the party.*

Mr. N. (*very feebly.*) I do wish you'd give up the notion altogether. Have a dinner-party, if you like.

Mrs. N. Now, Henry. You spoke to the children (*might* I mention the children?) so nicely the other night about selfishness, and then you want to set them such an example as that! What pleasure is a dinner-party to me? I sit for two hours between two men in white cravats, who are sure to be the greatest bores of the set, and they ask me, in made voices, what I think about Giuglini, and Colenso, and Fechter, and then I go up-stairs with the ladies, and have a still stupider hour till you all come up, just in time to hear the carriages announced.

Mr. N. (*actually delighted.*) Maria, thou reasonest well. We will not give the dinner-party, either. I am eager to show you that I am not selfish.

Mrs. N. I was thinking of Thursday, the 26th. That will be three weeks' notice, you know, only I must find out Mrs. Baltimore's night, because she knows so many of my set, and would be delighted to secure them. I suppose you couldn't see Mr. Baltimore in the City, and manage to extract it, accidentally. You are a good diplomatist, when you choose.

Mr. N. If I were, this party would not take place. Praise undeserved is satire in disguise. However, name a long day, the longer the better,

as that gives more chance of something happening to make it necessary to put it off.

Mrs. N. (*victorious, and insulting the slain.*) If there is an ungracious *way* of doing a thing, I will say you have the knack of finding it out. Making every allowance for your early habits, it is very hard, sometimes, to be talked to as if one were a tradesperson trying to cheat you into something.

Mr. N. My early habits are opposed to my sitting up till three in the morning, so don't expect me at your ridiculous party.

Mrs. N. (*haughtily.*) Then stay away. [*Exit.*

Mr. N. (*after meditation.*) Hm.

[*Goes to business.*

X.—ON PLEASURE BENT.

The distinguished Couple are in their Carriage (well, a hired Fly is a Carriage, ask the Tax People whether it isn't), and on their way to Covent Garden Theatre, to hear MR. BALFE'S *new Opera, "The Armourer of Nantes."*

Mr. Naggleton. Ah, old lady, we didn't get along so fast as this the last time we were here.

Mrs. N. Are you addressing me?

Mr. N. Why, who else? Is there a ghost in the carriage, or any other third person singular?

Mrs. N. I thought you might be speaking to the apple-woman by the lamp-post—you are fond of talking to the lower orders. Perhaps you will draw up the window.

Mr. N. (*obeying*). I meant, as you know very well, on the Illumination Night.

Mrs. N. If I am to have anything like a pleasant evening, do not revive the recollection of that night. I wonder that you are not ashamed to do so.

Mr. N. Wonder is a vulgar feeling for so

highly genteel a nature as yours, my dear; especially when there's nothing to wonder at. I am not ashamed at all, do you know?

Mrs. N. Very well; drop the subject.

Mr. N. Confound your petulance, Maria. I bear a good deal from you, because I can make allowance for your being—for your not being an over-wise woman; but, by Jove, you turn the screw too hard sometimes.

Mrs. N. Abuse, oath, insult, vulgarity, in a breath. Say what you please to me, Henry, you know I am helpless.

Mr. N. I know nothing of the kind; and I don't know anybody who can help herself better. But I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. There!

Mrs. N. It is too late in life for you to make a pretence of caring for *my* feelings, Henry. You never did; and the affectation is now more painful than the reality. Does Miss Pyne sing in this opera?

Mr. N. Yes, splendiferously.

Mrs. N. You have heard it, then?

Mr. N. Now, how should I hear it? You know where I have been every night since it came out.

Mrs. N. I know what you have told me of your movements, but a man who is so engaged in

business of importance might forget a trifle like going to the Opera.

Mr. N. Do I ever go to the theatre without you?

Mrs. N. I know not. Your conscience can best answer you.

Mr. N. Now I'll bet a guinea that some of your mischief-making, gossiping friends have been inventing some story about me. Out with it.

Mrs. N. Your irritation is strange, supposing that there are no grounds for any accusation. And I have made none. But having attacked *me*, you are glad of an excuse to turn upon my friends.

Mr. N. A wife's friends should be her husband's.

Mrs. N. Not when a husband chooses—I will not say unworthy ones, but friends of a class to which she has not been accustomed.

Mr. N. That's a cut at the poor "Flips." I'm sure one of 'em did you good service on the Illumination Night, and got us out of the block, when your genteel Mr. Snotchley sat in the corner as stupid as an owl and as savage as a bear.

Mrs. N. The noise and violence of the lower

orders were new to Mr. Snotchley, and produced a natural effect upon him, but he never forgot himself.

Mr. N. No, that's true, he remembered nobody else, and walked into the sherry as if it was his own. But that's nothing. I only say that a "Flip" was very useful.

Mrs. N. You mean that strange looking person in the Scotch bonnet. I was really ashamed of you, letting him lean upon the carriage-door, and giving him wine and a cigar.

Mr. N. Woman is incapable of gratitude, we know, but this is monstrous. Didn't he earn the sixpenn'orth of sherry by what he did with the policeman?

Mrs. N. He was vulgarly familiar with the man, and compromised us all.

Mr. N. Didn't he get the carriage moved, I ask you that?

Mrs. N. I dare say it was just going to move without his interference.

Mr. N. By Jove! We had been at that point for an hour and a quarter, and were told that the people before us had been there for two hours and a half.

Mrs. N. I have begged you not to recal that night. Do you think that I shall ever forget that

period of block, and your conduct, before the children, too ?

Mr. N. What do you mean by conduct ? It was a long spell, and I did what I could to amuse you all.

Mrs. N. You must have a strange opinion of me, or of Mr. Snotchley, to think that we could be amused by your exchanging vulgarities with the police-constables, or telling them that Mr. Snotchley was a wretched pugilist.

Mr. N. Ha ! ha ! I said just the reverse. I said he was Tom King, who was inclined to punch all their heads for not making way for us. Why, old Snotchley himself grinned at that, and but for you, and gentility, would have humoured the joke.

Mrs. N. I will take care how I expose him again to such coarseness.

Mr. N. Well, as we shan't have another Prince of Wales's wedding at present, he is tolerably safe. He did not offer to share the price of the carriage, though he started the idea of our having one.

Mrs. N. You could not have been so mean as to accept it, if he had.

Mr. N. I don't know that. Any how, he might have tried.

Mrs. N. My dear Henry, your commercial

habits prevent your appreciating the subtle delicacy of a true gentleman's nature.

Mr. N. May be so, and it's my misfortune that such subtle delicacy looks to me uncommonly like selfish shabbiness. However, a carriage won't ruin us.

Mrs. N. I was told yesterday that it would.

Mr. N. Who by?

Mrs. N. You mean by whom? By yourself. To be sure the carriage *then* spoken of was for your wife's health and pleasure, not for your own amusement.

Mr. N. O, ah! Yes, when Mother Baltimore had been riling you with the sight of her glaring brougham, and working you up to believing the world would be at an end if you didn't get on wheels. That's another pair of—another pair of horses. No, my dear Maria, this particularly comfortable and easy-going vehicle does quite well for us, and is much better than taking our own carriage to theatres and so on. "We Fly by night," as the song says.

Mrs. N. I have heard my uncle say that stinginess and vulgarity were born twins.

Mr. N. And he was an authority upon questions of birth, that excellent and lamented acc——

Mrs. N. (*sternly*). Henry!

Mr. N. (*cowed*). Accession to the aristocracy of our pedigree. But that does not alter the fact that we do not want any other carriage than that which Mr. Jobling is kind enough to have ready for us at any hour on demand, at the place inscribed Berkeley Mews, which always reads to me like a statement about a cat.

Mrs. N. I have no patience with such puerile trash. At your age you might leave off trying to make miserable jokes. Giggling and grey hairs don't go well together.

Mr. N. (*enraged*). Grey hairs yourself—what do you mean by that, Maria? I've heard one or two things of that kind from you, and I rather recommend you to discontinue the series.

Mrs. N. (*comforted and rewarded*). My dear Henry, you should never lose your temper, especially when you are going out for an evening's pleasure; but rather be thankful that you are still able to bear the fatigue of coming to the Opera, and that your hearing still enables you to know what is going on.

Mr. N. (*recovering*). Overdone, my dear; overdone. A woman should let bad alone. When you show that you mean to wound, you break the point of the weapon.

Mrs. N. Did you hear that weapon speech when you heard the *Armourer of Nantes*, dear?

Mr. N. Very well, Maria. As telling you the truth on all occasions is so repaid, I will be more sparing of it in future.

Mrs. N. (*laughing*). My dear Henry, are you going to carry stinginess into every department. Poor me! But here we are. (*They are under the portico.*)

Mr. N. (*calls to Coachman*). Go on, can't you? The next door.

Mrs. N. Do not be violent, dear. He knows his place. The principal door is for carriage people. The side-doors are good enough for cabs and flies.

Mr. N. (*handing his wife out*). Take care.

Mrs. N. (*sweetly*). O, never mind if I get wet feet. We save expense, you know. (*They enter.*)

Mr. N. Wet feet. You were under cover.

Mrs. N. (*as they ascend the Grand Staircase*). All right, dear. And it is very kind of you to come and be bored with a second hearing of the same opera, and I wish you had let me bring Mr. Snotchley instead, as he understands music, and you don't, but—

[*We leave them entering the crush-room.*

XI.—THE BISHOP.

Evening. The children have just gone up to bed. Now, to reveal a secret which we cannot keep any longer, MRS. NAGGLETON *literally "spoke by the card" when—but you'll see.*

Mr. Naggleton (*as the door closes*). Good night. (*After a pause.*) Bless 'em, they are very good children, after all.

Mrs. N. (*coldly*). After all what?

Mr. N. (*laughs*). A phrase. Before all, if you like it better.

Mrs. N. My liking is of no consequence, but I thought that perhaps you had been nursing up some charge against the poor things.

Mr. N. Nonsense. [*Begins to read Dr. Colenso.*

Mrs. N. However, you may well say, "after all." Considering what their father's favourite studies are, and that his conduct is of a piece with them; it is wonderful that the children's characters are not deteriorated by his example.

Mr. N. What's up now, in the name of everything that's detestable?

Mrs. N. You are polite, Henry, as well as elegant in your language.

Mr. N. I'm neither the one nor the other, and don't mean to be. What are you talking about?

Mrs. N. It is a common practice with culpability to affect indignation.

Mr. N. Confoundedly sententious you are, Maria. If you have nothing pleasanter to say, perhaps you will let me enjoy my evening in reading.

Mrs. N. O, you have so *many* ways of enjoying your evenings.

Mr. N. Have I ? Spending 'em here doesn't seem likely to be one.

Mrs. N. I am aware that you think so, Henry. An opera-house is perhaps a more pleasant place for a father and a husband.

Mr. N. Well, that's grateful. As if you didn't make me go to the opera.

Mrs. N. I make you ! O, Henry !

Mr. N. Why, I swear that you gave me no peace till I got you the box ; you reminded me of it at half a dozen breakfasts, and even set the child to play one of Miss Pyne's songs on the pianoforte, that you might have an additional poke at me.

Mrs. N. What a mean mind you must have to fancy such things.

Mr. N. Fancy—well, when a woman says to her daughter, "I think, love, that you are playing it too fast, but as your papa will not allow me to hear the opera, I cannot be sure," there's not much room for fancy as to what she means.

Mrs. N. One is never safe with you, Henry. A little playful badinage, which in good society is a lady's privilege, and which a gentleman always receives kindly and in the nicest sense, your cynical nature turns into sarcasm or hidden meaning.

Mr. N. Thank you, my dear, but I am not exactly a fool, and I know the difference in tone between playfulness and petulance. The tone is everything.

Mrs. N. I congratulate you on your musical knowledge. Your frequent visits to the opera do you good.

Mr. N. Frequent visits? Colenso's rather hard nuts to crack, Maria, but he's easy to your riddles.

Mrs. N. I request that you will not name that atheistic, immoral, and I believe improper book to me, however much I may be compelled to see its influence upon you.

Mr. N. As you haven't read a line of it, and couldn't understand one if you had, I say nothing at your ridiculous language about one of your Bishops—

Mrs. N. My Bishops! Everybody knows that a Colonial bishop is nobody, a mere emigrant travelling missionary.

Mr. N. One Paul was, I think, open to the same objection.

Mrs. N. If you are going to be downright profane, you had better say so, Henry, and I will go up-stairs and sit in the cold, rather than hear you.

Mr. N. But I'm not—(*sotto voce*) in spite of the temptation.

Mrs. N. What a lady is not intended to hear, she does not hear.

Mr. N. I am aware of that theory of moral acoustics, my dear. I will only venture to ask you what you happen to mean—if anything, which isn't always the case—by the influence of this book upon me?

Mrs. N. Ask your own conscience.

Mr. N. It is as mute as a dumb-bell on a dumb-waiter.

Mrs. N. If a wretched joke is enough for you, we will drop the subject.

Mr. N. We will not. For once, if you please, I request to know what you mean. Don't begin beating about the bush again, but tell me in two words.

Mrs. N. (*radiant*). I can do that, though they may be unpleasant.

Mr. N. Then I am sure you will. Let me hear them.

Mrs. N. WASHING TUBS.

Mr. N. My dear Maria. You have an aunt at Dr. Tuke's Asylum, and a grandfather who would have been looked after if he hadn't been poor, and so it's in the family, but you are breaking out in a fresh place. Are you cranky, or is this another bit of—what did you call it—spiteful badinage?

[MRS. N. *smiles, makes no reply, but throws a small oblong yellow card towards* MR. N. *It falls on the rug, but he can see printed in capital letters the words just before proclaimed by his partner.*

Mr. N. There are the words, certainly. Does it mean spirit-rapping?

Mrs. N. In a sense, yes, Henry. For it means imposture.

Mr. N. (*helplessly*). Washing Tubs mean imposture. Try Harper Twelvetrees's Powder.

Mrs. N. You act well, Henry, but you have

been watching much acting. You need not carry it on, however, as I know all. Had you not better take up that *return check.*

Mr. N. (*the inmost recesses of his dark heart suddenly illuminated as by Mr. Way's galvanic light*). Return check?

Mrs. N. Yes, Henry. Now, do not attempt to delude me. I could not know there were such things, or that words, selected at random, were printed on them, and changed every night to prevent cheating by the class (*pointedly*) who haunt the plebeian part of the theatre. But it has been explained to me, so spare equivocation.

Mr. N. O! (*Feebly.*) So that's a return check, is it. Dear me. Quite a curiosity of literature. Let us frame and glaze it.

Mrs. N. I pity you. I pity you sincerely, Henry Naggleton.

Mr. N. (*who has not decided on his line of action*). Do you, my dear? I'm sure it's very good of you; and pity, as Shakespeare says, is akin to love.

Mrs. N. Love! I have striven to fulfil my conjugal vow—you do not know how I have striven, Henry——

Mr. N. I can testify, my dear, to a good deal of strife.

Mrs. N. But it is a hard task to maintain love and honour where one witnesses fraud and falsehood.

Mr. N. (*roused lion*). Mrs. Naggleton, place a guard upon your expressions, or you may be sorry for it. I see what you have been driving at all this time. You have been, as you said of me, nursing up a charge for more than a fortnight, instead of bringing it out at once, as a loving and affectionate wife would have done, and been too glad to have an explanation.

Mrs. N. (*sternly*). Yes, if she could have *believed* it.

Mr. N. Believe this, or don't, it's the last word I shall condescend to say. You have been searching my pockets and found that card—

Mrs. N. Sarah found it in brushing your waistcoat.

Mr. N. When?

Mrs. N. Never mind. I don't choose to be catechised.

Mr. N. It is more than a week ago, for I've been wearing the waistcoat it was found in ever since Sunday.

Mrs. N. I am glad you don't deny that the card is a check. I was prepared to hear you say,

with a hypocritical laugh, that it was a new kind of advertisement.

Mr. N. (*wishes he had thought of it*). Suppose I had.

Mrs. N. Then I should have been prepared to name the theatre it came from, and the night it was issued.

Mr. N. (*furious*). So, Madam! You take pains to get up a case against your husband? And pray who may have been your accomplice in this domestic treachery?

Mrs. N. Your accomplice in your own treachery, Henry. Your friend, Mr. Wyndham Wareham, your idol, and patron. You see how much your public-house friends are to be depended on.

Mr. N. Wareham told you I had been with him to the Gallery! Wareham told you that was the return card!

Mrs. N. There! (*Plays a second card on the first*). There's his own, taken at the same time as yours. He gave it me. Does that satisfy you?

Mr. N. He's a double-faced humbug, and I'll never go to the "Flips" again till he's expelled.

Mrs. N. (*secretly exulting at having brought down two birds with one stone*). That is your own business, not mine. It is only my business to

show that I am not to be befooled. Something told me that you had some reason for not caring about getting that box for me, but little did I think that you had left me solitary here while you had been to the theatre. I remember, as if it were yesterday, that you said, "O, do you want to go; I don't hear that opera's up to the mark"—you were handing me a piece of haddock, and your eyes were on mine as you performed that falsehood. Henry, I shall never see your eyes again without thinking of haddocks.

Mr. N. (*recovering his temper and some of his sense, and resolved to laugh it off.*) Haddocks—well, my dear, I admit that the thing looks a little fishy, but it can be explained in a minute, and then you'll see that there's not much to complain of.

Mrs. N. Do I ever complain? Never, now. Those days are gone.

Mr. N. Don't be silly. You complain a great deal, and so you ought if you've anything really to complain of, only you haven't. See here. It was the "Flips" night, and you were not solitary, for you know I was going to be out, and Mrs. Baltimore was here. It so happened that there was nobody at the Club meeting but that inf—that inferior beast, Wareham, and myself, so we

thought we'd look into the theatre, and not being dressed, of course went up-stairs. We didn't stay long, and I came home. I should have told you all about it, but you were in an atrocious temper, because Mrs. Baltimore had got leave to keep a footman.

Mrs. N. That is right. Charge it on me.

Mr. N. So I do. Somehow there was no opportunity of mentioning it in the morning, and the longer a thing is kept back the less chance one finds of telling it, so I didn't tell you. It's not often I go anywhere without you, and I suppose I have a right to go to the theatre if I like?

Mrs. N. Such are the morals learned from atheistic books. You scoffed at Mr. Snotchley's advice to you not to read Dr. Colenso, but Mr. Snotchley knew the calibre of your mind, and that it was sure to be injured by such a work. Now you avow your conduct to have been deceitful and cowardly. I forgive you, Henry, but I should hope that you can never forgive yourself.

[*Exit.*

[Mr. N. *uses language which we are sure the* Bishop of Natal *would be the first person to reprehend, and which we have not the most remote intention of reporting. He*

then descends to the dining-room, to mix himself a large tumbler of brandy-and-water, and to mature a scheme for the utter discomfiture of MR. WYNDHAM WAREHAM.

XII.—ON THE DERBY.

After Breakfast on the Derby Day, 1863. *Rain pouring. A few Carriages are seen passing, either closed, or covered with umbrellas.* Mr. Naggleton *rings the bell.*

Mrs. Naggleton. What do you want now?

Mr. N. (*shortly.*) I want the bell answered.

Mrs. N. Sarah is up-stairs.

Mr. N. I don't want Sarah.

Mrs. N. The cook will think it is to tell Sarah to take away.

Mr. N. I don't care about the cook's thoughts.

[*Rings again.*

Mrs. N. Are you not well?

Mr. N. (*angrily.*) Bless my heart and soul, can't I ring a bell in my own house?

Mrs. N. You have shown that you can, I think.

Mr. N. Yes, but not that I can get it answered.

[*Rings again furiously, and the Cook comes in with her eyes very wide open.*

Cook. Did you ring, M'm?

Mrs. N. I! O dear no!

Mr. N. Let somebody get me a cab—a close cab—directly. [*Exit Cook without reply.*

Mrs. N. You are very fond of preaching about consideration for servants.

Mr. N. I'm not fond of it, but I have to do it more often than I like.

Mrs. N. If you practised what you preach, you would not send a girl from her work into the wet on such a morning.

Mr. N. You can send 'em fast enough, rain, hail, or shine, when you want to go to some ridiculous Concert. Let the boy go that cleans the boots, and does them so villainously.

Mrs. N. If you chose to keep a proper domestic, he would do them better, I dare say.

Mr. N. I keep the domestics I *think* proper, and if you kept them in better order and check, things would be pleasanter.

Mrs. N. (*smiling.*) Don't be angry with me, Henry, because it happens to rain on the Derby Day, and you are obliged to give up your holiday. I cannot command the weather, you know.

Mr. N. No, nor your tongue neither, or you wouldn't aggravate a man with his head full of business.

Mrs. N. O, I'm sure I beg your pardon. It is

something so new to hear you talk about business that you must make an allowance.

Mr. N. (*looking as if he should like to make her one, not too large, and dissolve the partnership*). Certainly, I don't talk business to you, for an obvious reason. Why the devil don't that cab come? [*Looks at the bell-handle.*

Mrs. N. Don't, Henry, don't. I will go for it myself. [*Rises.*

Mr. N. Are you out of your senses? There he goes. By Jove, she's only just got him off. That's downright insolence on the part of that woman, and you ought to send her away.

Mrs. N. Perhaps the poor child hadn't done his breakfast.

Mr. N. Of course. Take anybody's part but your husband's.

Mrs. N. I am a wife, Henry, but not a slave, and when my husband is in the wrong I shall take the liberty of telling him so. Your temper is growing upon you, and unless you control it, you will become a nuisance to yourself and to all about you. If it rains, and you are disappointed of the pleasure of throwing sticks at little dolls—

Mr. N. Little dolls be—hanged, and great dolls, too. You know I have as much intention of

going to Epsom as you have of being amiable. I can't say anything stronger.

Mrs. N. Or weaker, dear. But you always *do* go, and you always say that you are not going.

Mr. N. I went last year, and I have been once before, since the year we were married. I tell you I want to get into the City, because I expect important letters, and I may have to see two or three men before they go off to the races. That infernal boy! I believe he is standing to watch the carriages go by.

Mrs. N. Boys will be boys. You were a boy yourself once. And you are very like one now, in your irritation at being kept in town—don't tell me nonsense about it. All men think they are dreadfully wronged if they cannot go and make fools of themselves at Epsom.

Mr. N. Some people are fools ready-made, and need not go to Epsom to be manufactured. (*Looks savagely out at the window.*) I'll teach that boy manners!

Mrs. N. Well, dear, one does hear strange things, but if there is one branch of education that I should have advised you to decline attempting, it is that. Calling a wife a fool over her own breakfast cups and saucers is—

Mr. N. I didn't. It's untrue.

Mrs. N. And mending it by calling her something worse—but there is the poor boy in the cab —how wet he looks.

Mr. N. Yes, and nicely he has wetted the cushions for me, which is a thing that don't occur to you, of course.

Mrs. N. O, I wish it had been a fine day, and you had been able to go with your friends. It may be foolish and expensive amusement, and the company may not be fit for the father of children, but it is better than such a display of evil-temper, rudeness, and cruelty.

Mr. N. (*going.*) I'm a demon, no doubt—so don't wait dinner for me. In fact, I'd better say I'll get a chop in the City.

Mrs. N. No, Henry, do not utter a deliberate falsehood. I will not wait dinner, that is enough.

Mr. N. Sweet creature—sweet temper—sweet tongue.

[*Exit, and is heard to quarrel in the hall with his Inverness cape, wrong gloves, unbrushed hat, and umbrella that won't open, and moreover to launch a passing reproach at the boy for dawdling, and to repeat his direction to the cabman angrily, because that deaf fiend has the insolence to answer, "Sir?" to the first. Then*

MR. NAGGLETON *disappears until a little past*

ELEVEN O'CLOCK AT NIGHT,

when he re-enters the room. MRS. NAGGLETON *is reading* ZIMMERMAN "*On Solitude,*" *and does not look up at his entrance.*

Mr. N. (*with some natural and some acquired cheerfulness.*) Well, my dear, and how are you by this time?

Mrs. N. This time? Just midnight. O, I am very well. (*Closes her book.*)

Mr. N. Nay, only just eleven.

Mrs. N. I presume you do not wish to sit up?

Mr. N. Well, just ten minutes, and let me have a glass of something or other, and I'll tell you a bit of fun.

Mrs. N. I am not in a state of mind for what you consider fun. [*Rings.*

Mr. N. Come, don't bear malice. I know I went out a little fluffy, for I had had a bad night, and something to bother me, but I didn't mean to be unkind.

Enter SARAH.

Mrs. N. Your master wishes you to bring him the tray, a tumbler, hot and cold water, a tea-

spoon and the spirits. I suppose that the kitchen fire is out. In that case you must re-light it.

Mr. N. Never mind. Cold water will do.

Mrs. N. (*sternly.*) Hot and cold water.

[*Exit* SARAH.

Mr. N. O, don't have the fire lighted.

Mrs. N. I was abused this morning for not keeping my servants to their work. I will give no cause for a repetition of the reproach.

Mr. N. Reproach! Lord, Maria, how you bottle up a hasty word. Ar'n't we husband and wife? Forget and forgive—we've no time for quarrels in this world. I always do. Here's something for you.

[*Tosses nine bright sovereigns into her lap.*

Mrs. N. (*taking them up, and placing them at some distance from her on the table.*) Is that on account of the house-money?

Mr. N. No, no, that's a hextra as the child says. That's all for yourself, to make ducks and drakes with, if you like to be orni-orni-thological.

[MRS. N. *looks at him fixedly for a moment, and sighs deeply.*

Enter SARAH, *with tray, and exit.*

Mrs. N. Pray be careful with the glass jug. You had better let me mix it. Please don't spill

it over the cloth. Ah! Take care of the tumbler.

Mr. N. That's the way to make a fellow nervous, M'm. But no such luck. There—(*completes the brew*)—as nice as pie, and twice as wholesome. Your health. May I mix a little for you?

Mrs. N. For me! (*Sarcastically.*)

Mr. N. Do you good. But as you like. You might say thank you for nine sufferings, though. My winnings. Mrs. Naggleton, and here's long life to *Macaroni*, and to *Mr. Punch* for prophesying that *Mac* would win.

Mrs. N. I beg to decline money which, as I infer, you have won by gambling, if indeed you won it at all, and it is not a sort of hush-money added to losses of which I know nothing.

Mr. N. Hush-money be blowed. I won it fairly and lawfully in a sweepstake of nine, by drawing *Macaroni*, Mr. Naylor's horse, who, I inform you, M'm, is the Winner of the Derby, and, as I said, here's luck to him. It was a beautiful sight to see him win, and quite repaid me for a disagreeable journey. He won by only a head, and if *Lord Clifden* hadn't slipped, or changed legs at the last, you wouldn't have had those sovereigns.

Mrs. N. I repeat that I decline taking gambling money. Do you wish to sit up longer?

Mr. N. Of course I do. I haven't done my groggums. Bet you nine to one you take the money.

Mrs. N. Pray leave your race-course slang outside the door. It is an affectation that is perfectly ridiculous in a man who does not know one horse from another.

Mr. N. Maria, you're an antiphonetic—no, you are not—you are an antipathetic woman. If you had a good genial nature, you'd give me a kiss, or a box on the ear, which is all the same, and say, "I'm glad you've enjoyed yourself, my old dear, and thank you for thinking of me." That's the way to oil the wheels of domestic life, and make 'em work pleasantly. What good whiskey this is. (*Sings, objectionably.*)

"The man that hath good whiskey
And giveth his neighbour none,
He shan't have any of *my* whiskee
When *his* whiskee is done,
When his whiskee is done."

You'd join chorus if you were half-jolly. (*Sings.*)

"When his whiskee is done."

[*Slaps his knees, which is the American accompaniment to this delightful Lyric.*

Mrs. N. Pray, Henry, have some regard for our reputation, and don't let the neighbours think we keep a public house.

Mr. N. (*insanely.*) Ha! ha! I should like to keep a public-house, very well, and I'd hang out the sign of the Good Woman, and it should be you; for you *are* a good woman at bottom, in spite of your little tempers. Your health!

Mrs. N. And so you meant to go to the Derby all the time. Of course you did. And why all that mean deceit and pretence of business, and annoyance?

Mr. N. Swear I didn't mean to go. But I got my work done, and some fellows came in and offered me a seat, and as—

Mrs. N. I desire to hear no more.

Mr. N. Yes, do, my dear, for it's as good as a play. In came old Snotchley, and Piggy Farmer—

Mrs. N. Henry! Will you tell me, at midnight, in my own house, that Mr. Snotchley has been to the Derby with you?

Mr. N. Hasn't he? That's all. And came out as I never saw him before, as jolly as a sandboy, only he was a trifle wetter. There's one of his sovereigns in that heap, M'm, the lightest, I dare say, if one's lighter than the others,

but he paid it and lost it, and never made a wry face.

Mrs. N. You are deceiving me again, Henry.

Mr. N. Am I, by Jove? Put on your bonnet, it don't rain, and come round to his house and see. He's in no humour for bed, and we'll finish the evening there.

Mrs. N. You must be Mad.

Mr. N. Not a bit. Put on your bonnet. Or, if you don't, I'll just take up this money which you scorn, and I'll go down to the Club and take nine chances for the Oaks.

Mrs. N. (*snatching at the money with a good bit of womanly eagerness and a natural laugh.*) I'm blessed if you shall. (*Secures the sovereigns in a little pocket.*) There, now, go to bed. You sha'n't make any more, I declare you sha'n't. Go up-stairs. I 'll see to the things being put away. Walk straight now—the servant will see you—(*rings*)—Henry! Don't!

[*What that last exclamation referred to shall never be divulged in this world; but* MR. NAGGLETON *accepts the truce, and goes up-stairs singing, "The man that hath good whiskey."*

XIII.—ON THE DRAWING-ROOM.

MR. *and* MRS. NAGGLETON *in their own Drawing-room are beheld, like* FERDINAND *and* MIRANDA, *playing at chess, to which, to* FERDINAND'S *astonishment,* MIRANDA *has gaily challenged him.* MRS. NAGGLETON, *in emulation of* MR. PAUL MORPHY, *is playing two games at once, but not by any means blindfold.*

Mr. Naggleton. Check to your Queen.

Mrs. N. O, Henry! Now, that is very artful of you. How well you are playing! My belief is that you are getting practice somewhere out of the house, and that is not fair.

Mr. N. I have never touched a chessman since we played last. Do you mean to lose her?

Mrs. N. No, no, dear, only give me time. I can't think as fast as you do, with your arithmetical old head. And you have fortified every point. I think, if I could spare you, that you ought to go out and help the Federals.

Mr. N. You have rather crowded up the Queen, my dear. She's quite holding a levée with those bishops and knights.

Mrs. N. Now that's very funny, Henry. I call that true wit, which you can talk when you like. I must remember that, and tell it to dear Lady Pugbury.

Mr. N. Dear, is she? Pug was, and almost extortionate, when he kept the china-shop, and before he got knighted.

Mrs. N. My dear Henry, it was a wonderful porcelain manufactory, and I have heard you say that there can be no more honourable way of rising than by commerce.

Mr. N. Yes. But Pug was a humbug, and lived on other people's brains; and she's another, and I wonder you haven't found her out.

Mrs. N. Perhaps I have, after your hints. But she is good-natured, and I am sure it was very kind of her to offer to present me.

Mr. N. With what—tea cups, or soup plates?

Mrs. N. (*laughing.*) My dear, I come to you for all I want. I mean she has promised to present me at Court.

Mr. N. (*gasping.*) Present *you!*

Mrs. N. Yes, me. Why not, Henry?

Mr. N. You be presented at Court?

Mrs. N. Why not, I wonder? I suppose that I—(*mends her hand*)—I suppose that the wife of Henry Naggleton is a proper person to be received

there, or anywhere else that he chooses to send her.

Mr. N. (*rather hit too.*) But, my dear Maria—O, come, this is rather too ridiculous. If there were no other objection—and you can't be serious about it—you have no carriage, and the omnibus hasn't the *entrée.*

Mrs. N. What a funny picture you imagine. You really ought to send it to *Punch.* I declare it would be capital. But there would be no difficulty and no expense, at least for the carriage, for her Ladyship would take me. I arranged that.

Mr. N. Your Queen is in check, Maria.

Mrs. N. Well, dear, she won't run away while I speak to you. I want to consult you about my dress, and about jewels, because when you will condescend to give your mind to such things, you hit out a practical suggestion at once, and you do save me such a deal of trouble. What's the use of a husband, if he is not to assist one with his knowledge and decision?

Mr. N. My dear Maria, you can't say that I oppose any reasonable idea of yours, but what on earth do you want to go to the Palace for?

Mrs. N. Why, I think we owe something to ourselves.

Mr. N. Let us continue to owe it—ourselves are indulgent creditors.

Mrs. N. You make me laugh, but it isn't an argument, dear. I confess I have some curiosity, and I should like to see the scene.

Mr. N. It's all in the *Illustrated News*, where the women are handsomer and the men more majestic, I daresay, than in reality.

Mrs. N. No, no, that's nonsense. And I think that all persons of a certain station, like your wife's, should manifest their respect for the Heir Apparent to the Throne, and to his bride, by attending at least once.

Mr. N. I really don't see what we have to do with royalty, beyond paying the Queen's taxes.

Mrs. N. Now, Henry, don't give way to such vulgar, radical, democratic notions. Loyalty is next door to gentility, and I have noticed that persons who scoff at such things generally become bankrupts sooner or later. I assure you I have observed it.

Mr. N. I shall note your observation. How shall we put it? Persons who don't look after sovereigns will find themselves without bank-notes.

Mrs. N. I tell you, dear, don't turn everything into fun. I know that you have much more

strength of mind than I have, but don't laugh at me when I say that I own I should like to hear the children read about Mamma at breakfast the next day. "Mrs. Henry Naggleton, by Lady Pugbury." It is an event in a woman's life.

Mr. N. (*with that vicious memory of his.*) A Lady's life, my dear.

Mrs. N. (*makes a ball of her handkerchief and throws it at him.*) The real difficulty is, that I have no jewels.

Mr. N. Cornelia never said that.

Mrs. N. No, but I'm not Cornelia, nor cornelian either, and there's a joke for you, Mr. Henry. Now, dear, of course we must hire them for that day, and I should like you to go with me to Spark and Facet's, and arrange all that—they pay more respect to a gentleman than to a lady.

Mr. N. And expect the gentleman to reciprocate the extra payment. Now, I tell you seriously, Maria, the entire thing's absurd; but if it were not, I don't care about Lady Pug for a chaperone for you.

Mrs. N. No, and if I were a girl, or a young matron without much position, I would not have her; but it is a mere form, and it matters very little who introduces the wife of Henry Naggleton. She stands on her own name, or rather his.

Mr. N. Chè sara sara, and if the Countess Russell should pay you any marked attention, or tell you that the Earl is dying to consult me on some treaty, say I quoted his motto.

Mrs. N. (*dubiously*). But what does it mean, Henry?

Mr. N. Does the translator of Carey's *Dante*—I mean of *Dante*—ask me that? It means that I suppose I can't help myself.

Mrs. N. You are a good, dear creature. Won't the children be enchanted to see Mamma with a train and feathers?

Mr. N. Yes, the whole business seems adapted for such appreciation—but *are* you going to move that Queen, or do you mean me to take her?

[*The day of glory has come, and we may say has gone, for it is seven o'clock, p.m., and* MR. NAGGLETON *is quite ready for his dinner, and it is quite ready for him, and for his wife. He has shown no irritation at being kept waiting, however, but has been smiling, at intervals, with a very mischievous expression of face, as if he had heard something to somebody's disadvantage. There comes a tremendous ring, and in another minute* MRS. NAG-

GLETON *in full Court costume, enters the Drawing-room.*

Mr. N. Welcome home, Marchioness of Naggleton; you look splendid, but not exactly pleased. Your raiment is less ruffled than your brow; you have luckily escaped any crush, I conclude.

Mrs. N. (*taking off her feathers with anything but tender care.*) I don't advise you to begin annoying me *now*.

Mr. N. Select your own date, my dear, but (*hypocritically*) what is the matter ?

Mrs. N. I tell you, don't aggravate me.

Enter CARTER.

Carter. Please, m'm, the children want to know if they may come down and have another look at their mamma, before you change your dress.

Mrs. N. (*angrily*). No, they may not.

[*Exit* CARTER.

Mr. N. Rather hard, especially as you dwelt upon the pleasures of letting them see you in Court costume.

Mrs. N. (*turning to bay*). If you had behaved like an ordinary husband *this* would never have happened.

Mr. N. If I knew what *it* was I would endeavour to defend myself.

Mrs. N. I asked and begged and prayed you to go with us, and you wouldn't.

Mr. N. The Lord Chamberlain ordered me and the masculine element in general not to come to the drawing-room.

Mrs. N. But he did not forbid you from seeing us down to the Palace as you would have done if you possessed the least manliness or good feeling.

Mr. N. How the deuce was I to get into that pill-box of a carriage. There wasn't anything like room for Lady Pugbury and yourself. Your dresses filled it all up to the roof.

Mrs. N. You could have gone on the box.

Mr. N. Six hours tête-à-tête with her coachman. Yes, I could, and I didn't.

Mrs. N. No, and through your selfishness your wife's exposed to the humiliation of being the laughing-stock of all her friends.

Mr. N. Dear friends! But what have they to laugh at, I keep asking.

Mrs. N. Why, good gracious, haven't I told you half a dozen times that we never got to the Palace at all, the crowd of carriages was so great?

Mr. N. You should have started earlier.

Mrs. N. Of course say that. We were in the line by one, and it was your duty to have been with us, and make the police let us go on. Of course, I am a wife, and can't help myself, but Lady Pugbury is deeply offended, and I daresay will never speak to us again.

Mr. N. We may survive that. But where was her own lawful and bandy-legged husband? If she wanted an extra servant on the box of her carriage, it was Pug's place.

Mrs. N. How should I know?

Mr. N. Well, dear, it's aggravating to have taken so much trouble for nothing, but it can't be helped, and you had better get rid of your splendour, and have some dinner.

Mrs. N. I want no dinner.

Mr. N. Come, don't be childish. There will be plenty of Drawing-rooms, and another time we'll manage better.

Mrs. N. I will never try again as long as I live.

Mr. N. You'll think better of it when you have dined—now you are weary and hungry, I daresay.

Mrs. N. All your fault, if I am.

Mr. N. Don't be unjust—don't say that.

Mrs. N. I shall say what I choose, and I am not going to be put down by you.

Mr. N. Come, don't be rude, or I shall go and dine at the Club.

Mrs. N. You can go and dine at Jericho if you like.

Mr. N. The idea of a woman at your time of life flying out like a school-girl because she couldn't get into a room and make a curtesy.

Mrs. N. You are talking like an idiot.

Mr. N. Yes, I am repeating your words. (*Seriously.*) I think I had better write at once to the Prince, and explain that you and Lady Pug intended to be loyal, and beg that your absence may be overlooked. Carter can take the letter.

Mrs. N. Loyal indeed. The Prince——

Mr. N. My dear!

Mrs. N. If it wasn't his fault, it was that of the haughty stuck-up nosed aristocratic peacocks about the Court, who are as poor as church mice for all their fine airs, and would be glad to borrow money of their betters, whom they insult.

Mr. N. Such awful sentiments make me shudder. Loyalty is next door to gentility, and we of the Blue Blood, we with a proud pedigree, niece of the celebrated man m——

Mrs. N. I have tried to make you a gentleman, Henry, but now I give up the task. Have your

dinner, and go to the Club. I shall not come down again to-night.

[*Sweeps from the room, but the dignity of the exit is somewhat marred by her angry clutch at her unaccustomed train.*

Mr. N. (*the fiend.*) Ha! Ha! I oughtn't to be angry, this time. The event has avenged me. Piggy Farmer was right when he said he saw them, and that they hadn't a chance. Devilish handsome she looked though, and none the worse for the excitement of her wrath. The bandeau in her hair was effective; she is like adversity, also a toad, in respect to wearing a precious jewel in her head. I might have propounded that to her as a conundrum, but it will keep. I *will* go to the Club.

[*Does, a brute.*

XIV.—AT HOVE.

Our friends have, like all other civilised people, been absent from the Metropolis for some time. They took a house at Eastbourne, for the season, but the defences which the doctors of that place made for its unhealthiness, convinced MR. *and* MRS. NAGGLETON *that a locality requiring so much advocacy had better be left to the sanatory authorities. So they came on to Brighton. They have just come in to lunch.*

Mr. Naggleton. I don't seem to want any lunch.

Mrs. N. It would be strange if you did, after eating all those apples and sweetmeats and rubbish.

Mr. N. I had only one apple, and one pear-drop, which the children made me take.

Mrs. N. Made you take! And you call yourself the head of a family, and pretend to guide and direct the rest. If you could not help indulging your old school-boy tastes, you might have some consideration for the children, and not stuff them with trash and spoil their dinners.

Mr. N. Why, you bought the apples yourself.

Mrs. N. But not to be eaten then. I meant them for dessert.

Mr. N. You didn't say so, and it was difficult to infer the fact from your immediately proceeding to distribute them among the kids.

Mrs. N. Kids! Is that the language you wish your children to talk?

Mr. N. They are none of 'em in the room.

Mrs. N. It would be just the same if they were. I have noticed that. Mr. Snotchley quoted one night a line he had learned from some Latin classical poet which you would do well to study and act upon.

Mr. N. What did the Latin classical poet say to Mr. Snotchley, my dear, I forget, I'm sure. Was it *Varium et mutabile semper fœmina?*

Mrs. N. I daresay—it sounded like that, but it meant that the greatest reverence is due to young persons.

Mr. N. I am sure, my dear, I show the utmost reverence to young persons—and to persons who are not so young. There is no harm in kids unless they butt your legs.

Mrs. N. Of course, you always take refuge in buffoonery.

Mr. N. No, sometimes I take refuge in bathing machines, as to-day, when you dragged me out

for a walk in spite of a sky that looked as black as you did at my making an objection.

Mrs. N. We don't come to the sea-side to stay in-doors all day, but to have the benefit of the fresh air. If you are so afraid of a little rain, you should take a Macintosh and an umbrella.

Mr. N. You lent the first to Mr. and the second to Mrs. Snotchley on Tuesday night, and neither have they had the grace to return.

Mrs. N. Did you expect Mr. Snotchley to come out in a day like this?

Mr. N. Well, you made *me* come out in a day like this, in fact this very day.

Mrs. N. His habits are very different from yours. He has lived with the superior classes, who remain at home when the weather is unfavourable, or else go out in their carriages, while you have the mercantile habits of a man who is tied to business, and must go out to work like a clerk whether he likes it or not.

Mr. N. Yes, I'm very depraved and demoralised, I know, but one's balance at the banker's is none the worse for one's neglecting the barometer.

Mrs. N. I am not reproaching you, Henry, I am only stating a fact, but you are so dreadfully thin-skinned that if I said the sun shone you would find something to complain of.

Mr. N. I should, if you said so, just now, my dear. I should complain of the absence of your usual veracity. The sun appears to me never to shine down here.

Mrs. N. I know what that means. Another hint that you want to leave Brighton, and be back to your darling London.

Mr. N. (*with dignity.*) I beg to say, Maria, that I do not hint my wishes, but signify them. When I deem it time to end our sojourn by the Coast, I will say so. In the meantime do not cry out before you are hurt.

Mrs. N. Why, you have been as miserable as possible all the time we have been here.

Mr. N. Thanks to your efforts, I have not been particularly comfortable, but as I have made no complaint, I do not see that you need make any.

Mrs. N. O, very well then, let us go back to-morrow.

Mr. N. We cannot do that, having to pay for the house until Wednesday week. Besides (*recovering himself*) if you and the children are enjoying yourselves, that is happiness for me.

Mrs. N. That's right, scoff at domestic feeling. I cannot think, for my part, what you married for.

Mr. N. Well, my dear, at this very long distance of time, I am really unable to tell you at a

moment's notice—and I do not observe around me any particular aid to memory on the point. But I will endeavour to recollect, and inform you on some other occasion. Have you finished your lunch?

Mrs. N. Why?

Mr. N. Because we might as well have the things taken away.

Mrs. N. What for?

Mr. N. Because somebody might call.

Mrs. N. Who?

Mr. N. How should I know? Perhaps the polite and penitent Snotchley might put his aristocracy into his pocket and bring home my Macintosh.

Mrs. N. The fuss you make about that miserable Macintosh is perfectly unbearable. I will walk over and fetch it home myself, and take care how I lend any of your things again.

Mr. N. Don't walk, my dear, go in two cabs, for I'm sure one wouldn't hold you in your present state of temper.

Mrs. N. I should like to know where you picked up that piece of vulgarity.

Mr. N. Why, my love? Do you wish to go and look for another piece like it?

Mrs. N. I quite shiver when I hear you talking to the children, and I wait to hear what coarseness you are going to teach them next.

Mr. N. (*sings.*)

"With her silvery shakery, O, O, O,
The woman that couldn't get warm."

Bless me, how the sea air freshens up one's voice. I could take the chair at a Harmonic Meeting.

Mrs. N. (*slowly.*) Yes, I do not dispute that.

Mr. N. I think there is one held somewhere near here. I've a good mind to go, and take old Snotchley with me.

Mrs. N. *He* go to such a place!

Mr. N. I'll bet you a pair of gloves he does, if I ask him.

Mrs. N. You would not presume to ask him.

Mr. N. You shall see. I shall tell him that it is his duty, as an instructor of youth, to be acquainted with all the snares with which they might be tempted, and I'll undertake to bring him home by midnight slightly flavoured with Cavendish, which he will like as an aristocratic baccy.

Mrs. N. Pray, pray, Henry, do not talk in that manner. You cannot imagine how offensive it is to my ears. Are you coming on the Parade?

Mr. N. The swells will not be there yet, my dear.

Mrs. N. You forget that we are not in Brighton, but have a long distance to walk, thanks to your taking a house in this ridiculous neighbourhood.

Mr. N. It was my fault, I suppose, that Eastbourne became dangerous. It was my fault, I suppose, that Brighton was so full that we couldn't get a house.

Mrs. N. Had we gone to Scarborough, as I begged that we might do, we should have been in no danger, and we need not have hidden ourselves in a hole like Hove.

Mr. N. You are quite alliterative, Maria, and I scorn to remind you that you utterly refused to go to Scarborough, when I offered to go there.

Mrs. N. Yes, after the scene you made, and the terrors you expressed about the frightful expense, and then at the last minute pretended to give way—of course no woman of ordinary spirit was going to be treated like a child.

Mr. N. If I had treated you like a child, I should have taken you just where I pleased, instead of coming to a place which I detest.

Mrs. N. Naturally you detest Brighton, because it is a place where the upper classes come, and where a certain decorum and refinement prevails, and you cannot lounge about the Parade at all hours in short trousers, with a distorted wide-awake hat, a dirty old shooting jacket with gaping pockets, and a clay pipe.

Mr. N. That is a gross exaggeration, but that

would be more sensible than rigging oneself out like a Bond Street lounger, and parading up and down for hours, smirking at acquaintances, staring at painted women, and listening to a band playing tunes that you'd send a policeman to stop if they were performed before your windows in town.

Mrs. N. You have no refinement, Henry, and it is one of your misfortunes.

Mr. N. As you say, one of them. And what do you say to the paint on the women's faces?

Mrs. N. Are you going to accuse me of painting?

Mr. N. No, my dear, no, no (*laughing*). Even the lily, we read, may be painted, but not, I think, the decidedly developed, not to say full-blown rose.

Mrs. N. I make no answer to insults.

Mr. N. I never offer any. Can't you take a joke?

Mrs. N. I delight in true wit, but not——

Mr. N. Not in wit whose essence is truth. But you won't come to the point. What do you, a respectable British matron, say to walking about among those animated paint-pots in pork-pie hats.

Mrs. N. Will you inform me how much worse it is for a woman to lay vegetable rouge on her cheek, because it is pale, than for a man to apply walnut pommade to his hair, because it is grey?

Mr. N. (*floored.*) I wish you would leave my dressing-table alone. I never can keep a single thing—somebody comes and takes it. I didn't know the hair stuff I bought was walnut pommade—I asked the man for anything that was good for the hair, and I thought walnuts were as harmless as anything else. What inconsequent nonsense you talk.

Mrs. N. I? ahem! (*smiles.*)

[*And they go on the Parade, and the humbled* Mr. Naggleton *is quite civil and polite all the afternoon.*

XV.—ON POLITICS.

The SCENE *is laid in* MR. NAGGLETON'S "*Library*," *an imposing apartment measuring twelve feet by ten, and containing a book-case and a boot-rack. Enter to* MR. NAGGLETON, MRS. NAGGLETON, *bearing a newspaper.*

Mr. Naggleton (*who is at his desk, reading a large Blue Book and making enormous notes therefrom*). Ah, Maria. One moment. "Witness considers that the outlay upon a Royal Palace ought to be under the control of the vestry of the parish in which such palace is situate." (*Writes.*) And I concur. Now, then, my dear, what is the next article?

Mrs. N. You need not remind me of your tradesmanlike education; but—

Mr. N. No, my dear, but if you use such language, I must take leave to remind you of the rules of syntax. An education cannot be like a tradesman. Devote the energies of your remarkable mind to the consideration of that proposition.

Mrs. N. Be pleased to stop talking nonsense, and just tell me what this means.

[*Shows him a paragraph in her newspaper.*

Mr. N. (*Reddening, but pretending to be unconscious.*) I am pleased to see that you can condescend to take an interest in any periodical besides *Le Follet*, my dear. What is this? (*Reads.*) "We understand from good authority, that at the approaching general election, one of the candidates for the representation of the great and liberal borough of Finsbury will be found in the person of Mr. Henry Naggleton, the eminent drysalter of Lower Thames Street, and of Westbourne Gardens, Hyde Park. This gentleman's political principles entitle him to the confidence of the electors, and his oratorial powers are of no mean order. We hope that he will stand." Well, I am sure that it is very pleasing to be introduced in this favourable way to the notice of the public.

Mrs. N. Mr. Naggleton!

Mr. N. He hears with ears.

[*Rather uncomfortable, however, in spite of his quotation.*

Mrs. N. You cannot mean to tell me that this—that you have given the slightest authority for printing such a disgraceful and disgusting paragraph.

Mr. N. Modestly waiving the newspaper's compliments, I see nothing to object to in the paragraph. All its statements are true. I am a drysalter, and those are my two addresses.

Mrs. N. The newspaper ought to be prosecuted. As if the vulgarity of printing your trade, and trade address, was not enough, you must drag my house into the business.

Mr. N. Well, your house came out of the business.

Mrs. N. Henry, this is no common affair. I generally speak my mind, and there is an end of it, but this becomes serious, and you must be good enough to abstain from insulting me with jokes. What does this paragraph mean?

Mr. N. What it says.

Mrs. N. What! You have the face to sit there and tell me that you are going to squander the money which ought to be your children's, to buy yourself into Parliament for such a place as Finsbury. That it should come to this!

Mr. N. (*savagely.*) That what should come to what?

Mrs. N. O, well, that is enough. I must consult with my family as to what it is my duty to do. I feel crushed and bewildered.

Mr. N. Consult your family, Madam? What

do you mean by that? I have merely to inform you that if your family takes the liberty of intruding its impertinence upon me, I shall make very short work with your family, Mrs. Naggleton.

Mrs. N. I cannot answer your violence, Henry. That it should come to this!

Mr. N. (*we fear with a strong expression which need not be set down.*) If you would cease to repeat that idiotic cuckoo note, and talk sense, I might answer you. If you can't, perhaps you will let me read.

Mrs. N. Henry! Henry!

[*Looks earnestly at him, and then takes to her pockethandkerchief.*

Mr. N. (*relenting.*) Maria, do not be so absurd. In the first place there is no harm done at present, and in the second there is none intended.

Mrs. N. (*with a very long sob.*) O———o!

Mr. N. There is nothing unreasonable in a man's having an ambition to sit in Parliament, I suppose?

Mrs. N. (*with another very long sob.*) O———o!

Mr. N. Don't go on in that way, or you will compel me to act without consulting you. I *had* looked for your advice and assistance.

Mrs. N. Mine! *I* help to ruin you and rob my children. Henry!

Mr. N. Ruin and robbery be—left out of the argument. I tell you that nothing is settled, but that if I stand for Finsbury it will be on the distinct understanding that I do not pay one shilling. Do you hear that?

Mrs. N. It is well to treat me like a child, Henry, but I listen to the conversation that goes on around me. I understand your Jesuitry.

Mr. N. And I don't understand the word.

Mrs. N. Mr. Snotchley mentioned the other evening how these things are done. *You* do not pay. Of course not. But *somebody* puts a large sum of money into a bank, for bribing votes, and though you have no idea who has done it, you are bound in honour to see that he gets it again.

Mr. N. Mr. Snotchley has derived his experience from observing and probably participating in the corrupt practices of his patrons, the unscrupulous aristocracy, who—

Mrs. N. Henry—it is a small matter at such a moment as this, but your whole language has changed, and you talk as if you were making speeches to the rabble.

Mr. N. Rabble, Maria, is not a term to be used in describing any portion of your fellow-creatures, and you will specially eliminate it from your vocabulary during my connection with political life.

Mrs. N. Oh! That means that you are going to be connected with the lowest of the low. If you must move out of your own sphere into one for which you are ridiculously unfit, you might have tried for something respectable.

Mr. N. For some pocket borough, I suppose, on sale by some friend of Mr. Snotchley's.

Mrs. N. There you might at least have been elected like a gentleman.

Mr. N. Certainly. I might have broken the laws myself, and caused a few hundreds of other persons to take bribes and to perjure themselves.

Mrs. N. If you are so much better and more virtuous than other Members of Parliament, I wonder you condescend to join them.

Mr. N. (*proudly.*) There are men, Maria, who will enter Parliament unstained by a single offence against the law, and if I enter it, I shall be one of that band.

Mrs. N. Band, indeed, yes, a brass band, to profess such hypocritical virtue. Don't I know that you can no more get elected for Finsbury without the good-will of the public-houses than you can fly in the air?

Mr. N. (*uneasily.*) Who told you that nonsense?

Mrs. N. Is it nonsense? I am not to be

fooled. Henry, I think it my duty to tell you that you must be insane to go on in this manner. I can account for your conduct in no other way.

Mr. N. And who asks you to account for my conduct.

Mrs. N. Everybody will ask me.

Mr. N. Who's everybody. Your family, perhaps?

Mrs. N. Well, if they should show enough interest in my welfare and my children's to remark that you ought to be very rich to engage in elections——

Mr. N. You may ask them to show a little more interest, and promote your welfare and your children's by paying me certain debts which you know of.

Mrs. N. And you would consign my relatives to incarceration that you may squander the money in the beer-houses of Islington.

Mr. N. That speech is perhaps the greatest feat in the way of a flying leap that will be performed during the whole hunting season. Ha! ha! ha! What an old goose you are!

Mrs. N. Pray, Henry, pray take advice.

Mr. N. My dear, I'm quite well.

Mrs. N. Think of the children. Why should their prospects be blighted for the sake of your

foolish vanity. Don't fly out; you know I speak the truth, and only for your good. You are about as fit to be a Member of Parliament as I am to make a steam-engine. You have no seriousness; you can amuse people of your own sort with after-dinner speeches of not very refined humour, but you cannot speak so as to command respect, and as for politics, you know nothing but what you learn from newspapers. You will only be a laughing-stock, and it will be very hard upon me to hear you made a butt in good society.

Mr. N. (*in a white rage.*) Your unwifelike disrespect for me, and your utter ignorance on political questions I can pardon, with some pity, but please to leave the children's names out, or I shall leave the house.

Mrs. N. (*quietly.*) Is it good grammar to say unwifelike disrespect. Can disrespect be like a wife?

Mr. N. (*snorting.*) Perhaps you will allow me to finish my reading?

Mrs. N. Before you turn me out of the room, will you be so kind as to say what I am to answer when anybody asks me about the truth of the paragraph?

Mr. N. Ask them in return how they think I made my money.

Mrs. N. What a question!

Mr. N. Never mind; ask it, and if they can't tell, say that it was by minding my own business.

Mrs. N. (*sadly.*) And this is the treatment which a wife receives when she humbly creeps into her husband's room and ventures to ask for his affectionate confidence in a matter of such importance to them both. Well, well!

Mr. N. Affectionate confidence! Pelts him with abuse for an hour, and then talks of affectionate confidence.

Mrs. N. (*almost tenderly.*) And cannot a man of the world, and a husband, make a little allowance for the excitement of a wife whose mind has been suddenly troubled, as much for his sake as her own, and who beside is far from well?

Mr. N. I did not know you were not well, my dear Maria. You look the picture of health. Why don't you sit down?

Mrs. N. (*smiles.*) You did not ask me.

Mr. N. Ask you! How can you be so foolish.

[*Gives her a chair.*

Mrs. N. Never mind now, dear, I must go up to the nursery. Don't be angry with me.

Mr. N. You *do* try me, occasionally, Maria, and really it is not the thing to try and drive me. If you had not flown at me as you did, I should

have told you that before you came into the room, I had sent off a letter to the paper to contradict the paragraph. I have no intention of standing for Finsbury.

Mrs. N. Well, I did *not* think that upon reflection you would be such an idiot as to offer yourself.

Mr. N. You did not?

Mrs. N. No. But I am sorry you sent away the letter without letting somebody else look over it to see that you had expressed yourself with tact. (*Has the door in her hand.*) Mr. Snotchley will call in the afternoon, and he could have corrected it for you. However, I am glad that you have shuffled out of it somehow. [*Exit, and shuts door.*

[*And on the whole it is as well that she did shut it. The enraged politician takes the oaths and his seat, but not in a way that would at all please that eminent theologian and bishop-stirrer, the Speaker.*

XVI.—UPON ROME.

The happy couple are at Breakfast in their house in the fashionable locality in which we had last the pleasure of meeting them. MR. NAGGLETON *is, of course, reading his "Times."* MRS. NAGGLETON *has received some letters by the morning post, and has been meditating on their contents.*

Mrs. Naggleton. Henry, this is the First of August.

Mr. N. (*without looking up.*) Maria, your chronology is indisputable. Moreover, I wish you many happy returns of the day.

Mrs. N. Good feeling would dictate your avoiding a joke on *that* subject, Henry.

Mr. N. (*conscious.*) O, isn't it your birthday, my dear? But that is no reason why I should not wish you a happy return of the day, or of any day.

Mrs. N. Happiness is a word for persons who are differently circumstanced from myself, Henry, but I am making no complaint. I merely reminded you that this is the first of August.

Mr. N. (*prepares to receive cavalry.*) I had already learned that fact from the newspaper.

Mrs. N. You may learn something else from it, I dare say, and be told that everybody but ourselves is out of town.

Mr. N. If there is such a personal statement, my dear, I shall come to it presently, and I will then consider whether I ought to call the editor to account.

Mrs. N. I think, Henry, that by this time you have known me quite long enough—

Mr. N. My dear, I am incapable of admitting anything so rude.

Mrs. N. (*emphatically.*) Quite long enough to be aware that nonsense may delay what I may wish to say, but cannot prevent it.

Mr. N. Have I ever refused my tribute to your pertinacity, my dear Maria? What do you wish to say now?

Mrs. N. What it would not have been necessary for me to say, if I had had a different husband.

Mr. N. Well, you have an indifferent one. Agreed. Go on.

Mrs. N. Indifferent, indeed, Henry. Indifferent to the state of my health, and that of his children.

Mr. N. Agreed, again. How hard he tried to

get you from Mrs. Owleybird's party on Friday, when morning was dawning. And how pleasantly he handed Dr. Peter Grievous a cheque for thirty-seven pounds on Saturday for medical attendance. Your husband is all that is objectionable, but make the best of him while he lasts.

Mrs. N. (*mildly.*) It is, I am sure, as much for your own sake as mine that I wish, if we are to visit the Continent, that we should not delay until the season becomes unhealthy.

Mr. N. But suppose we are not to visit the Continent. Who's the Continent, that we owe him so much attention?

Mrs. N. O, go to Southend, if you like, or stay at home, and shut the front shutters. I don't care.

Mr. N. Very well, my dear. As that is the case, I will consider those two excellent suggestions. At first blush I seem to prefer the shutters.

Mrs. N. Is this the way in which we ought to converse, Henry? I am sure that I hear nothing like it between other couples. Mr. Winkletop can be playful in answering his wife, but it is affectionate fun.

Mr. N. Playful darlings!

Mrs. N. And though Mr. and Mrs. Gough-

Hawe are always laughing, they understand one another, and she has no wish ungratified. But you are always in an attitude of fighting and resistance.

Mr. N. Ajax defying the lightning; eh? Am I so ferocious? Well, look on me as another classical sculpture, the Dying Gladiator; and now, what can I do for you before I die?

Mrs. N. Ah! Those allusions remind me of what would indeed make me happy. But it is of no use talking.

Mr. N. Never mind that. Talk. What is it? Do you want to go to M. Brucciani's new gallery, and see his casts?

Mrs. N. Shall I *ever* see Rome? Here is a letter from Mrs. Bosser, who is there, and who writes in perfect raptures of its treasures of art and of antiquity.

Mr. N. Mrs. Bosser? No, no, Maria. Come.

Mrs. N. There is her letter. (*Throws it to him.*)

Mr. N. No, thank you. Lord Palmerston says he has had no time for twenty years to read anything but manuscript. I prefer print, not being eighty. But Mrs. Bosser. I think it was that eminent lover of art who told us Landseer's dogs were clever, but not equal to those of Animal Carracci,

and I am sure it was that eminent antiquarian who told us that Hereford Cathedral was being restored in the Renaissance style.

Mrs. N. Your spiteful memory supplies an argument against you. We go abroad to learn.

Mr. N. Some of us, like yourself, my dear Maria, have nothing to learn, except how to stay at home.

Mrs. N. I am too painfully conscious of my own deficiencies to accept an insincere compliment dictated by a mean economy.

Mr. N. (*enraged.*) Then I would avoid exposing those deficiencies to fellow-travellers, as you would do in a place like Rome.

Mrs. N. (*gently.*) There was a time, Henry, when you pretended to take pleasure in showing new objects to your wife, and making her enjoy them by your clever explanations, and the information that you have so curiously acquired.

Mr. N. (*hit, but staggering up.*) There is nothing curious in it. I have endeavoured to read books, and I have tried to remember what was in them.

Mrs. N. Men's minds are so much better trained than ours, and you learn to apply your knowledge at a moment's notice. I know nothing more delightful to a wife than to be able to turn to her husband for anything she wants to know, and I

am sure that if you and I could see Rome together, it would be something to remember all our lives.

Mr. N. (*moved.*) My dear, I am a humble but faithful adherent to the Church of England as by Law Established. What could I say to myself, if your Protestant principles should be sapped by the Scarlet Lady, and you should seek refuge in a convent?

Mrs. N. (*playfully.*) I took the veil once, my love, and my courage has not been so very well rewarded that I am inclined to try again; so do not be afraid, or perhaps I should say, have no hopes.

Mr. N. Well, but look here now. Another year I would not object. But we are too late for Rome this year.

Mrs. N. We can never be too late for the Eternal City. Mrs. Bosser is enchanted with it.

Mr. N. The Eternal City and Widow Bosser. "Powers eternal, such names mingled." Really, Maria, the idea of a woman of your intellectual power being led by that idiot, at whom you used to be always laughing.

Mrs. N. I am not led by her, Henry.

Mr. N. (*artfully.*) Yes, you are; and I cannot understand the ascendency she has acquired over you. Even Snotchley, the milk-and-honey boy,

has remarked that you dress at her, repeat her foolish sayings, and surrender your own judgment to hers.

Mrs. N. If you permit another person to make disparaging remarks to you about your own wife, I say no more.

Mr. N. But I did not permit it. The words were hardly out of his mouth when I gave him my mind on his impertinence, and he will not repeat it; but to do him justice, he apologised by urging that he only noticed what everybody else said, wondering at your humility.

Mrs. N. That settles the question.

Mr. N. And you will not give further cause for such tattle by following Mrs. Bosser to Rome at her bidding.

Mrs. N. I will go to Rome to show how utterly I despise tattlers and backbiters.

Mr. N. (*hoist with his own petard.*) I do not quite see it in that light.

Mrs. N. If you have the spirit of a man you will. And I will write to Mr. Snotchley this very morning, and tell him among other things, that while Mrs. Snotchley owes me for the very shawl in which she came to my party——

Mr. N. (*mildly, seeing a door of deliverance.*) What shawl, my dear?

Mrs. N. (*indignantly.*) What shawl? Have men no eyes? Did you not put it on her great shoulders yourself, and quote something ridiculous about not displaying her beauties to the moon?

Mr. N. (*quietly.*) I understood you to say it was your shawl, my dear. The one I gave you on your—birthday? (*With meaning.*)

Mrs. N. (*too angry to be discreet.*) I never liked it, as you know.

Mr. N. You told me it was sweet.

Mrs. N. I didn't—or I hadn't tried it on—or one changes one's mind. At least she said she liked it, and I let her have it at the price you said it cost, and she owes me the money.

Mr. N. (*to himself.*) Not a bad bargain for us, if she pays that, and takes a year's credit. Maria, I don't like this.

Mrs. N. Don't like what?

Mr. N. I say nothing about ladies selling things —I suppose you have your own code of high manners. But I made you a present on your birthday, and you pretend to be delighted with it, and then you sell it. I shall remember that.

Mrs. N. No doubt you will. It will be an admirable excuse for stinginess for the rest of your life.

Mr. N. I have never been stingy, and you have no right to say so.

Mrs. N. I shall say what I like.

Mr. N. Still, at your time of life, you should set your children an example of speaking the truth.

Mrs. N. So I do.

Mr. N. I deny it. And I repeat that you did not do a wife-like act in parting with a present of mine.

Mrs. N. A wonderful present, certainly, to make a fuss about. And I am not a child, or a slave, to have a thing given me on condition I always watch over it, and never lose it.

Mr. N. If your temper had been given you on those conditions, my dear, I fear you would be without one. I am glad to find that you are not.

Mrs. N. (*suddenly changing from volcano to iceberg.*) Will you buy a Continental "Bradshaw" to-day, and ascertain about the route to Italy?

Mr. N. (*solemnly.*) I will not. No, Maria. Every walk we might take in Rome would remind me of this painful disclosure. As you have said, the Eternal City would be an eternal memory. The Tarpeian Rock would recall domestic treachery. The Via Sacra would show me Mrs. Snotchley going to church in my shawl. Bitter thoughts would have a long Triumph in the Forum; and

the inevitable ball at the banker's would make me think of the cheque Snotchley owes. Southend, or the Shutters, or even Paris; but no Rome.

[*Exit under cover of his own fire; and then, outside, and with a disreputable grin—*

But to quote a Roman poet, *Sic me servavit Apollo.*

Mrs. N. (*within.*) I did not think I should get him even to Paris; but there's nothing like asking for more than you want. *That* is safe, and I love Paris. I wonder whether Mr. Snotchley did say a word of all that. I will call and lunch there, and perhaps she will pay me. Lucky I did not tell him that I had sold the shawl to her at half-price.

XVII.—ON VOLUNTEERING.

MR. NAGGLETON *has dined in Town.* MRS. NAGGLETON *has dined with the children. He has returned about Six o'clock.* SCENE—*The Drawing-Room.*

Mr. Naggleton (*cheerily*). Anybody called?

Mrs. N. (*coldly.*) Who should call at this time of year, when every decent person is out of town?

Mr. N. (*playfully.*) I asked an answer, not a question.

Mrs. N. (*as before.*) No one has called on me.

Mr. N. rings the bell.

Mrs. N. What do you want?

Mr. N. I want the bell answered. That is one reason why I rang it.

Mrs. N. The servants are busy.

Mr. N. Now, how should *you* know? Surely such domestic details are beneath your notice. I doubt whether you know how many servants we have. Here is one, however.

Enter Housemaid.

Has anyone called for me?

Housemaid. Only the taxes, Sir, and Mr. Wyndham Wareham. He said he hadn't a card, but his love, and you was to be punctual at eight to be grilled.

Mr. N. I understand.

Housemaid. And there's a large parcel of clothes for you, Sir. I have put it in the dressing-room.

Exit Housemaid.

Mr. N. What a blessing this rain has been. The country must look lovely.

Mrs. N. That concerns those who are allowed to see it, not me.

Mr. N. All in good time, my dear. The taxes. I thought I had paid them.

Mrs. N. O dear, don't apologise for leaving your wife exposed to duns. A man's home is the last thing he thinks of.

Mr. N. The first and the last, if he's a good man.

Mrs. N. But the insolence of officials must be borne—a woman cannot help herself when a husband is unwilling or unable to meet his debts, —but I will not bear vulgar people coming and leaving joking messages with my domestics.

Mr. N. No, I told you it was not the thing when we were walking out last night, and you left word with Mrs. Snotchley's Martha to say that you supposed her Mistress had been washed away by the rain.

Mrs. N. Will you be good enough to tell Mr. Wareham that if he chooses to persist in calling here, he had better behave like a gentleman ?

Mr. N. I shall tell him nothing of the kind.

Mrs. N. Then I shall.

Mr. N. I can't prevent you making an unlady-like speech to anybody, but that is scarcely the way to impress him with a sense of his error.

Mrs. N. We shall see. I am not afraid of him, though you are.

Mr. N. Am I ? I didn't know it.

Mrs. N. Other people do.

Mr. N. Bless them.

Mrs. N. I wanted to call on the Baltimores this evening, but as you have Mr. Wareham's orders to be somewhere else, of course that is out of the question.

Mr. N. Not for that reason, but because I do not choose to call on any but decent people.

Mrs. N. And what have you got to say against the Baltimores, pray, except—I admit that that

is bad enough—except that they are your wife's friends.

Mr. N. You just said that all decent people were out of town.

Mrs. N. The Baltimores go on Thursday, and that's why I want to see them, but it is so like you to shelter yourself behind a mean catch.

Mr. N. Your image is rather confused, my dear, and savoureth less of your favourite, Dante, than of your favourite, Dundreary. Sheltering behind a catch would be difficult, even to an expert cricketer.

Mrs. N. Trash!

Mr. N. (*struggling to be civil, but not exactly succeeding.*) True. But King Solomon has told us to answer a—wise person according to his wisdom.

Mrs. N. I don't believe there is another man in London calling himself a gentleman who would allow people to leave ridiculous messages at his door to make a servant grin when she delivers them.

Mr. N. I have already given you my opinion on that kind of message, so we need not re-open the subject. If you like, I will leave you at Baltimore's, and call for you in an hour and a half.

Mrs. N. I shall do no such thing.

Mr. N. I said what *I* would do, my dear, if you liked.

Mrs. N. Certainly, that you may go to some low haunt or other with Mr. Wareham, and come back to the Baltimore's in a state of vulgar excitement.

Mr. N. Serene in good intent, Maria, I defy that taunt. We are going to see a nobleman, a real nobleman, my dear, and to listen to his aristocratic and improving conversation for the time I have mentioned.

Mrs. N. As if any nobleman would receive Mr. Wareham and you!

Mr. N. I am going by the divine creature's express invitation, not to say command, Mrs. Naggleton. Now!

Mrs. N. I will believe that when I see it.

Mr. N. Duly thanking you for your wifely confidence and respect, I will at once permit you to see it. There!

[*He gives her a note, in which he is informed by the Adjutant of the Westbourne Volunteers that they are to come to drill that evening at Eight, when the* COLONEL, LORD SILVERTONGUE, *will be present.*

Mrs. N. (*having read it with that contemptuous haste so delightful in woman.*) I did not think that

you were such a Fool. You must excuse the word. I know no better one.

Mr. N. (*in a white rage.*) Well, that *is* an excuse, I admit. And I deserve the word, for—for several reasons, one being before my face. However, there are limits to everything. (*Rises.*) I will send up your cheque from wherever I may be to-morrow. Good evening.

Mrs. N. (*thinking of the Paris trip.*) Now, Henry, is not that cowardly, and just like a man? A wife does not exactly see the rationality of something he is doing, and instead of defending it, he runs away, at a time of year, too, when she is without a soul to speak to.

Mr. N. She had better speak to her own soul, at least to her conscience, and ask what she deserves.

Mrs. N. I was wrong. There! But I have been far from well all day, and you startled me so with the sudden paper, that I did not know what I said. How can you be so cross?

Mr. N. Cross is not the word.

Mrs. N. Haven't I begged your pardon? But why could you not tell me that you were going to be a volunteer?

Mr. N. I had planned what I foolishly thought had been a pleasant little surprise for you and the

children when I came down in the uniform. But I ought to have known how little I could calculate upon your abominable temper.

Mrs. N. And if my temper is not quite what it was, what has spoiled it but the trials of my married life. And you ought, therefore, to be the last person to revile me for it.

Mr. N. You say what is absolutely untrue, and no woman ever had less to complain of.

Mrs. N. Ah! you little know what people say——

Mr. N. And I care as little.

Mrs. N. (*has a capital rejoinder; and if she were only in Paris, but as it is, only says*), My dear Henry, do not set the strength of your mind against mine. Allow me a woman's privilege of being unreasonable. And come, if I let you go to Lord Silvertongue's, will you promise not to be later than ten.

Mr. N. If I am, tell the servant to go round for you.

Mrs. N. Now that's unkind, after what I have said——

Mr. N. After what you have said? I don't think so.

Mrs. N. Yes it is. Go and have your drill—I suppose that is what Mr. Wareham meant by grill

—and make friends with Lord Silvertongue, and ask him to come and see us.

Mr. N. Not very likely that he will.

Mrs. N. I don't know why. It is a fine noble family; but he is only the second peer, and his grandfather made his fortune by honourable commerce, just as you have done. Where is the wonderful difference between you?

Mr. N. (*utterly subdued.*) You wicked radical, you; I wonder that fat Peerage there, which you study so hard, doesn't explode and blow you away.

Mrs. N. I respect the aristocracy, dear, but to depreciate the great middle class would ill become the wife of a mercantile man——

Mr. N. (*but not spitefully.*) Or the niece of a celebrated acc——

Mrs. N. Henry!

Mr. N. Acclimatiser of infant aristocrats.

Mrs. N. (*thoughtfully.*) Do you know that I think poor Uncle would have liked to be called that? He was fond of sonorous expressions.

Mr. N. (*laughing.*) The taste is hereditary.

Mrs. N. (*sees the Tuileries.*) Don't begin scolding me again. You might invite me to come and see you—grilled. O! I *must* tell that to the children.

Mr. N. (*uneasily.*) Well, yes, certainly, but you

had better wait until the Corps is a little more perfect in certain exercises.

Mrs. N. (*innocently.*) Such as the goose-step, dear? I think I have heard of that manœuvre.

Mr. N. That is—they call it the balance-step without gaining ground—that is an early accomplishment.

Mrs. N. Show me how you do it; do, dear.

Mr. N. (*rather red.*) Never mind now. I will another time. Now do you wish me to go with you to the Baltimores?

Mrs. N. Of course I do. They are going to Brussels, which is only a little Paris after all, I believe, and I want you to say to them, carelessly, in your humourous way, that a little Paris is not big enough for us, and that we are going to the great one.

Mr. N. But we are not.

Mrs. N. O yes, dear, we are. You know you promised that, and you never go back from your word to me. You promised me faithfully.

Mr. N. Bad English.

Mrs. N. Then we'll mend it with good French. Was not that clever, Mr. Henry? And mind you bring out what I tell you neatly to the Baltimores. I shall lead up to it, so look out. By the way, what was the large parcel Sarah spoke of?

Mr. N. (*slightly sheepishly.*) My uniform.

Mrs. N. O, go and put it on—you must, and you shall. I should like to see it of all things. Couldn't you go to Paris in it?

Mr. N. Certainly not.

Mrs. N. I don't know why. The French are a military nation, and would take it as a compliment.

Mr. N. I have no desire to compliment the French nation.

Mrs. N. But you have a desire to compliment me. Go up and put the uniform on, and knock at the children's door and tell them to come down. Then we'll go to Mrs. Baltimore's. Would you mind having a cab, as I am rather tired?

Mr. N. As you like. Be ready at half-past seven.

Mrs. N. All right. You are quite like the Duke of Wellington already in your prompt orders.

Mr. N. (*half grumbling.*) I wish I wasn't like him in having to invade France. [*Exit.*

Mrs. N. Yes, I should think I would have a cab. Fancy walking in daylight with a man who has on a uniform for the first time! But I have clenched Paris. Men are very weak. If *he* had called *me* a fool, I would have made it Rome before I spoke to him again. But we must put up with them. Come in, darlings.

XVIII.—ON SPIRITUALISM.

Mr. Naggleton (*taking a seat*). Do you see anything remarkable about me, Maria?

Mrs. N. (*scarcely looking at him.*) You look very slovenly, and you have come up-stairs with muddy boots, but there is nothing remarkable in either.

Mr. N. In either of my boots?

Mrs. N. In either proof of your disregard of the decencies of life. I witness it too often.

Mr. N. (*exalted.*) Ah, don't scold now, but listen to something interesting.

Mrs. N. I prefer to go to bed. It is very late.

Mr. N. Yes, it was not much later last night when you informed me that you were ready to go out.

Mrs. N. O, if you wish to quarrel, I submit. I have no spirits to resist.

Mr. N. Resist, nonsense. Spirits is the word, however. I have been with the spirits.

Mrs. N. What nonsense are you talking?

Mr. N. None. I tell you I have been at a

Manifestation, and I have seen some very extraordinary things.

Mrs. N. You cannot mean that you have been at a *séance*.

Mr. N. Why can't I?

Mrs. N. But you don't?

Mr. N. But I do.

Mrs. N. Then you have been to one of those meetings, where they sit in the dark, and supernatural things are pretended to be done.

Mr. N. Are done.

Mrs. N. Henry, I did hope that I should never have to despise my husband.

Mr. N. Well, I rather hoped so too, at least not this husband.

Mrs. N. I trust that you are joking with me.

Mr. N. You don't encourage me in *that* practice, my dear. I am telling you a simple truth. I have been to a spirit-manifestation, and I thought that though you are not usually much interested in anything I say, you might like to hear about this.

Mrs. N. I have heard enough.

Mr. N. O, very well, just as you please. I am sorry now that I did not go over and have a cigar with Browner and Poldoodie, instead of making the best of my way home.

Mrs. N. Mr. Browner I know enough of to

wish to know no more. The other person with the ridiculous name I never heard of, but you have a talent for picking up low acquaintance. That is a trifle however.

Mr. N. It is not a trifle that you should tell a spiteful [untruth. And Poldoodie is not a low acquaintance, at least you did not think so when he took you down to dinner at the Pankeys'.

Mrs. N. What a falsehood. That was Mr. Hoister.

Mr. N. All the same. In our facetious way we call him Poldoodie, which is some kind of Scotch for oyster.

Mrs. N. I thought him too much of a gentleman to allow vulgar liberties to be taken with his name.

Mr. N. Then you thought wrong, you see, as you often do. A true gentleman is not a starched stiff-back Snotchleyfied prig, but a man who can distinguish between good fellowship and impertinence.

Mrs. N. If he associates with your set, he has plenty of opportunities of appreciating the latter. (*Rises.*) I suppose you will go to bed when you are ready.

Mr. N. I suppose I shall. Good night, if you are going.

Mrs. N. Put out the gas, unless you are afraid.

Mr. N. What should I be afraid of?

Mrs. N. Your conscience.

Mr. N. What's my conscience got to do with gas? What has the Gas Company's own conscience to do with it either, if you come to that, for it's very bad and precious dear?

Mrs. N. I see that you wish not to be left alone, and I do not wonder. (*Returns to her seat.*) If you play these tricks with your nerves, you will soon be a pitiable creature.

Mr. N. I am that, but not on account of nerves. My nerves were never better in my life. What do you mean?

Mrs. N. Try to carry it off so, but I know you better. You have been dreadfully frightened, and it serves you quite right.

Mr. N. Frightened at what, in the name of all that is ridiculous?

Mrs. N. How should I know what wicked folly you have been witnessing? I only see that it has had its effect on you, being a weak man, and that you are all in a flurry. You had better go to bed. I will light you to your door, and you can keep the gas burning all night—that extravagance is better than your being terrified into illness. Will you take anything sedative?

Mr. N. Yes, some brandy-and-water, and a

cigar, which I'll have in the study. Don't be nonsensical. I am about as much frightened as you are. Will you hear what I have seen?

Mrs. N. I had rather not, but if talking relieves you, go on.

Mr. N. (*aside.*) I knew she wanted to hear all about it. Well, Poldoodie called——

Mrs. N. Oblige me by keeping that vulgarity for your friends, and by giving persons their right names.

Mr. N. Hoister, then, but I think the other name is more aristocratic—hoister reminds one of a crane at a warehouse.

Mrs. N. As I do not frequent warehouses, I am not reminded of anything of the kind.

Mr. N. (*swallowing his repartee.*) *He* called and asked me to go to the *séance*, which was at a private house in Pall Mall, so I had a chop with him at the Reform Club.

Mrs. N. In those boots? But I believe that the radical and republican fashion of that place tramples upon all external decencies—the floor is sanded, I suppose.

Mr. N. How can you talk such idiotcy? I wish you could see the Reform kitchen.

Mrs. N. You don't mean that you condescended to dine in a kitchen?

Mr. N. No, I don't, though I have dined in worse places. We had one bottle of champagne, and one of claret, between three, Browner being the other, and some liqueur.

Mrs. N. Your wife had one glass of pale ale.

Mr. N. More goose my wife, who has the cellar-key.

Mrs. N. Which she will never use again after the insult and abuse which followed her last use of it.

Mr. N. There was neither, Maria. I only said that you might have given a pack of schoolboys something cheaper than my best port. But confound your memory for old grievances—you never remember pleasant things.

Mrs. N. I have so few to remember.

Mr. N. You are as lucky a woman as I know. Well, we went over at eight, and found about twenty people assembled. The Medium was brought in, and the operator made a little speech, and then the lights were put out, and we sat in a circle, with our hands joined.

Mrs. N. Fancy a pack of men being such fools.

Mr. N. There were some women, too, for I held hands with two.

Mrs. N. Nice sort of persons to come to such a place.

Mr. N. You 'd go to-morrow, if I would take you.

Mrs. N. (*knows that quite well.*) I hope, Henry, that even if you commanded me to go, I should know my duty too well to obey.

Mr. N. I won't try you, my dear, especially as I disapprove of women sanctioning such things. After a time we heard some scratchings and knockings, and then music began to play in different parts of the room, the instruments moving about.

Mrs. N. Confederates, of course.

Mr. N. I don't know whether they were Federals or Confederates. Then some luminous hands appeared, and waved about.

Mrs. N. Old gloves stuffed with bran and rubbed with phosphorus, and stuck on the end of wires, or lazytongs.

Mr. N. I cannot say. Then a strong and mysterious wind passed by, and they said it was the spirits' wings.

Mrs. N. Pair of bellows, most likely, blown by some of the party.

Mr. N. And then there was a very faint light, and some said that they saw a human figure moving through the air.

Mrs. N. Your own child could do that trick

better, in the daylight, with the kite he blows out into the shape of a boy. Upon my word, I can hardly listen with patience to such trash.

Mr. N. And then something hit me on the head.

Mrs. N. I am very glad of it.

Mr. N. And then some said that hands were touching them.

Mrs. N. No doubt they were. Pickpockets. The business seems invented for genteel pick-pockets.

Mr. N. And at last a hand came to me and touched mine.

Mrs. N. If you had had any spirit you would have caught it.

Mr. N. I did, and held it tight.

Mrs. N. And of course let go, just as you do everything.

Mr. N. Not exactly, for there it is.

[*Flings the Spirit-hand on the table.* MRS. NAGGLETON *snatches it up.*

Mrs. N. As I said. No, where are my scissors. (*Cuts it.*) No, wool, not bran, and springs, and you see where it was broken off from whatever was holding it. Why, you can smell the phosphorus quite plainly.

Mr. N. Well, but don't rub it on my nose.

Mrs. N. But didn't anybody know that you had caught the hand? Of course you couldn't keep the secret to yourself.

Mr. N. I held my tongue. The business came to a sudden end, and we were told that the spirits were unhappy, and that a compact of honour had been broken. But as nobody confessed, there was an end.

Mrs. N. Henry, I was displeased with you for going, for you are not strong, and you are easily imposed upon. But I am glad that you had sense enough not to be deceived by the jugglers. You ought to have denounced, out loud, the whole imposition, and shown that hand. Mr. Snotchley would have done so, I am sure. But you have behaved better than I expected, and so THERE (*only on his cheek, though*), and now I will mix you some brandy-and-water, if you 'll come down-stairs. Wicked humbugs, they ought to be flogged.

Mr. N. Strong language, my dear.

Mrs. N. I mean it to be strong.

Mr. N. Mean the same about my grog, my dear.

[*Exeunt, to celebrate the Truce.*

XIX.—AT THE ZOOLOGICAL.

SCENE—*The Zoological Gardens. A beautiful afternoon. Sunday. The clock over the Camel says half-past three. A large gathering of the Upper Ten Thousand.* MR. *and* MRS. NAGGLETON, *the* MISSES EMMELINE *and* CECILIA NAGGLETON, *and the* MASTERS EDGAR, WALTER *and* PETER NAGGLETON, *all in spring array, enter, and advance up the Broad Walk.*

Mrs. Naggleton. Pierre, do not hop. This is Sunday.

Mr. N. Yes, remember, Peter, nothing hops on Sundays, except the birds, who know no better, having no private tutors.

Mrs. N. That is right; make him laugh at his mother's advice.

Mr. N. On the contrary, my dear, I would imprint it on his memory. Though I don't know why he shouldn't hop, like the little hills.

Mrs. N. I am not acquainted with the family you mention, and I do not wish them proposed as models for my children.

Mr. N. Nicely you attend to your Brady and Tate, Mrs. Naggleton.

Mrs. N. (*recollecting and sternly.*) Pray, Henry, abstain from such profanity while your children are within hearing.

Mr. N. Profanity is in intention, my dear. Mr. Snotchley had the sense to quote that, when you were good enough to laugh at his old joke about Paul being a cricketer, because he stood up for the Eleven and was bowled, and Rhoda stood at the wicket.

Mrs. N. That was real wit, and I wonder you understood it.

Mr. N. Oh, wonderful husband, that can so astonish his wife! Shakspeare.

Mrs. N. I think you might do better than mouth out Shakspeare on Sunday. Emmeline, come away from the bears!

Mr. N. Bless me, they came here to see the beasts, and they shall see them. Jump, Syllabubs. (*Lifts her to the rail.*) Here, Walter, take this fourpenny bit, and see how many stale buns that young lady will give you.

Mrs. N. Teaching your children to break the Sabbath in that manner!

Mr. N. I am teaching them to break nothing except buns. Isn't a bear to be fed on Sunday, especially when he has fallen into a pit? That's a man, Walter—a bun a-piece. Where's the

stick? Here we are. Now, Mr. Bear, climb for your lunch!

Mrs. N. I shall walk on to the chairs on the grass. I can at least avoid witnessing what I disapprove.

Mr. N. All right, dear; go and stare at the bonnets, while we finish our secular duties.

[*Exit* MRS. N.

Walter. Come on, Papa, don't give all the buns to these stupid beasts. I want to give something to the ippopotamus.

Mr. N. So you ought, in return for the h you've taken away from him.

[*Shout of laughter from the children.* MRS. N. *looks angrily up from the plateau below, and* MR. N. *thinks it wisest to rejoin her.*

Emmeline. O, Mamma, what do you think Papa said?

Mrs. N. Nothing, my love, which I wish you to repeat. Walk on quietly, two and two.

Mr. N. Too-too-too dears, like a penny trumpet.

[*Another shout.*

Mrs. N. This behaviour is more disgraceful, Henry, than I could have believed your conduct ever would be. Really, this is not a place for you. You must suppose that you are in some low tea-garden, among the rabble.

Mr. N. No, my dear. These are the Gardens

of the Royal Zoological Society, Regent's Park, N.W., and I am a fellow, and it's your fault if I am not a jolly fellow. It's the most enjoyable place in London, or, as you would say, in this extensive metropolis, and I came here to enjoy myself, and—deducting conjugalities—so I do. Go where you like, children, but mind, don't put your fingers between the bars of a single den—and I say (*solemnly*), mind this. If one of you children gets eaten, I'll never speak to that child again. [*Loud shout and away go the young ones.*

Mrs. N. Catch me coming here again with you.

Mr. N. I didn't ask you to come.

Mrs. N. No, I am not accusing you of any such civility.

Mr. N. You asked yourself to come, and I wish that at the same time you'd asked yourself whether you couldn't come in a decent temper.

Mrs. N. You are the only person, I have often said, who ever dared to find fault with my temper.

Mr. N. Perhaps, as I have often answered, because I am the only person on whom you ever dared to try it.

Mrs. N. (*smiling.*) That speaks well for your dignity, as the Head of the Family.

Mr. N. It speaks better, perhaps, for my patience, which some day you will try too far.

Mrs. N. It is so manly to threaten a helpless woman who is chained for life.

Mr. N. If she is, she needn't rattle her chains incessantly. But come, it is Sunday, and you have been to church, and earned a right to neglect all the minor duties, such as kindness and politeness. Won't you take a chair?

Mrs. N. Not in front, certainly, that all your set, Dick, Tom, and Harry, may come up and claim acquaintance with one.

Mr. N. You were glad enough to know my set once.

Mrs. N. You thought so.

Mr. N. You said so. Excuse me for believing it, and two or three other things.

Mrs. N. Ah! (*A Cyclopædia of Useful Knowledge in that little noise*).

[*They take chairs behind the rail, and observe the elegant company seated, passing, and re-passing.*

Mr. N. If it wasn't Sunday, I should say "My eye, what a pretty girl!"

Mrs. N. Painted flirt!

Mr. N. Lovely hair, come.

Mrs. N. Bought—I hope paid for.

Mr. N. She is very like Lady Annabel Lee whom you rave about.

Mrs. N. I never rave about anybody, and that person is as like Lady Annabel as I am like your grandmother.

Mr. N. (*brutally.*) Hm!

Mrs. N. (*disdaining to notice such atrocious coarseness.*) I wonder who that distinguished-looking man is? You never know anybody, so it's no use asking you.

Mr. N. I know in this case.

Mrs. N. Pardon me if I don't believe it. He is evidently somebody. His dress and manner are those of the best society.

Mr. N. How should you know?

Mrs. N. I may be unfortunately circumstanced as regards my own position, but I have a lady's instinct, which never leads me astray in forming a judgment.

Mr. N. Well, it is right enough this time.

Mrs. N. Of course, it is. Whom do you suppose that gentleman to be?

Mr. N. I don't suppose about it. (*Calls out to the Distinguished Somebody,* "How are you, Blobby?")

[*The Distinguished Somebody looks round, and* MRS. NAGGLETON *turns red with shame and anger. But the Distinguished Somebody comes up to the rail, and shakes hands with* MR. NAGGLETON.

D. S. Hawful ot, ain't it, my boy?

Mr. N. Stunning! I have the superior honour of introducing you to my wife. Mr. Blobbings, Mrs. Naggleton. (*She shudders a fraction of a bow.*) And how's tallow?

D. S. Sputtery, sputtery. But sink the shop on Sunday, my bricksy-wicksy! Be genteel, my boy, if the house *is* a-fire. Splendid day, M'm.

Mrs. N. (*faintly.*) Very fine. Where are those children?

[*Walks off, and is shortly afterwards overtaken by the faithful* MR. NAGGLETON.

Mr. N. Sorry you went off, my dear. Blobbings wanted us to come over to Camden Town, and dine at half-past four.

Mrs. N. I detest practical jokes as a rule, but that gentleman showed all the self-possesion and ready wit of a man of society, and I can forgive him.

Mr. N. Blobbings a gentleman! Why, he's in the tallow line!

Mrs. N. You need not meanly adopt his clever *ruse*, and try to carry it on. I hate imitation.

Mr. N. It is not one of your usual faults that your meaning is difficult of comprehension, my

dear. But upon the present occasion I must remark *Davus sum, non Œdipus.*

Mrs. N. I wish you would not quote Latin without asking Mr. Snotchley whether you pronounce it right. I am sure *that* is wrong; my ear tells me so.

Mr. N. Confound Snotchley and your ear? What about Blobbings?

Mrs. N. That gentleman was a stranger to you, but instead of resenting your low trick, he humoured it, and pretended to know you. His affectation of vulgar talk showed me that, because it was overdone—not even one of your friends in the City could be quite so hideously coarse. It was clever, but the aristocracy are never taken aback.

Mr. N. No, but I am. By Jove! Not Blobbings? I'll fetch him. No, I can't, for he has hurried out to be in time for dinner.

Mrs. N. (*sarcastically.*) Lucky! Say no more about it, but be thankful that your vulgarity escaped castigation—some gentlemen might not have let you escape so easily. If he had pulled your nose for calling out to him, you could not have complained.

Mr. N. (*bewildered.*) I should not, certainly.

(*Passes an "abstract resolution" in spite of* MR.

Gladstone.) Yes, you are a clever woman. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. N. (*half mollified by the victory.*) Don't make such a noise, Henry, dear. People will think that one of the wild beasts has got loose. (*They walk to a more removed ground.*)

Mr. N. (*rallying his senses and his forces.*) Which day did you ask the Snotchleys, the Baltimores, and the Silverdales for?

Mrs. N. (*suspiciously.*) Why?

Mr. N. Hang it, can't I know when I'm to give a dinner?

Mrs. N. Don't be so violent—next Thursday, a quarter to eight.

Mr. N. All right. (*Makes a note of it on a letter.*)

Mrs. N. Now may a wife be allowed to ask why the question is put?

Mr. N. Perhaps I may have a pleasant surprise for you, in the presence of an aristocratic friend.

Mrs. N. (*feels that the Federal armies have closed round, but resolves on one dash.*) You will ask no person to my table without consulting me and obtaining my sanction, and if you do so I will insult him.

Mr. N. I put the party off by to-morrow's early

post if you do not to-night send an invitation to Blobbings.

Mrs. N. (*evacuates Richmond and Petersburg.*) Henry, you are very unkind. (*Uses handkerchief, but slightly, as she is in good society.*) Can you not accept a harmless little joke, meant to pay you out for the way you showed me that I had mistaken your friend for a gentleman—I mean I am sure he is very well as a man of business—but you know what I mean.

Mr. N. I do, Maria, and also what I mean.

Mrs. N. And you will put off the party?

Mr. N. Except on the condition I have made.

Mrs. N. But I accept the condition. I am not ashamed of your friends, though in your ill-nature you accuse me of being. I shall be happy to invite Mr. Bobbin.

Mr. N. Blobbings? You will?

Mrs. N. Certainly, or any other friend you wish. Do I give dinners for my own pleasure, or to support your credit? You know I dislike them, and prefer a chop at one with the children. Of course we will ask Mr. Bobbings.

Mr. N. Blobbings. (*Embarrassed.*) Well, we shall see about it.

Mrs. N. I will send the note to a pillar-box to-night, and he will have it at nine in the morn-

ing. I shall see his address in the Directory; you need not think about it again.

Mr. N. (*weakly.*) Well, I don't know that he *is* just the man to meet the Silverdales and Baltimores.

Mrs. N. He shall come.

Mr. N. No; on second thoughts, he shall not.

Mrs. N. He shall come. After what you have said, *I* will put the party off if you do not invite him.

Mr. N. I will invite him, then.

Mrs. N. I understand, and when he will get the note. I'll ask him myself.

Mr. N. I tell you it won't do; he's a vulgar beast, and I wouldn't have him for a hundred pounds.

Mrs. N. (*calmly.*) He comes, nevertheless. A wife is not to be played with like a child or a toy. (*The Lion roars.*)

Mr. N. (*roars also.*) Maria! I will be obeyed, or —

Enter (*dignus vindice nodus*) EMMELINE *and* CECILIA *running.*

Both Children. O, Mamma! O, Papa! Come, come! run, run!

Both Parients. What, what! Where, where?

Both Children. Peter, Peter!

Both Parients. What, what?—speak!

Cecilia. The Blue-nosed Monkey has torn off his ——

Both Parients. Nose?

Emmeline. Hat, and he and his wife are eating it.

[*General amnesty, and both armies rush off to attack the Bluenoses.*

XX.—ON THE AFRICAINE.

SCENE—*The Breakfast Table.*

DATE (important)—*Monday, 24th July,* 1865.

Mr. Naggleton (*who is reading the Times*). I see that the *Africaine* went well on Saturday night.

Mrs. N. I suppose that after thirty or forty performances the singers ought to know the music.

Mr. N. I dare say they will. Only as the season will be over this week, I don't see how they are to have all that practice.

Mrs. N. What are you talking about? It is more than two months since the opera was produced.

Mr. N. In Paris, yes.

Mrs. N. (*looking up with a terrible glance, and repeating, slowly.*) In Paris—yes. Be good enough to give me the paper for a moment. (*She takes it from his unresisting hand, and reads a few lines.*) I see. I did not understand you. I could

not for the moment believe it. I see. I might have expected it.

Mr. N. Expected what? That the opera would come out? Well, you might; Mr. Gye is in the habit of keeping his promises.

Mrs. N. (*intensely.*) Yes, Mr. Gye is.

Mr. N. What a tone! Is that meant as a crusher for the other house?

Mrs. N. You understand me, I have no doubt. Let us drop the subject.

Mr. N. The Irishman protested against being picked up before he had fallen down. I protest against dropping a subject before it has been picked up. I don't know what you are driving at.

Mrs. N. Your evasion is too contemptible. But you are the master of the house, and have a right to deny your family any amusement. We can only submit in silence.

Mr. N. I must quote the Irishman again, and say that pigs may fly, but they are very unlikely birds to do it. Submission in silence is one of your favourite habits, isn't it?

Mrs. N. Do you wish it? I have read somewhere that the slave's silence is the tyrant's danger.

Mr. N. You great idiot, don't talk such trash. I am a frightful tyrant (*furious*), I know, and you

are a trampled slave. If you can't be rational, hold your tongue, and let me read the newspaper.

Mrs. N. It's a man's privilege to escape in a fit of violence, as I have read that some fish get away by making a cloud of mud.

Mr. N. (*recovering.*) I compliment you on your zoology. The Gardens have set you studying. But now that the storm is over, will you be good enough to tell me what it was all about?

Mrs. N. (*with a melancholy smile.*) If I could ever respect hypocrisy, it would be from its association with such perseverance. I am making no complaint, Henry.

Mr. N. You always say that after giving me five-and-twenty minutes' jobation. Well, you have no complaint, but only a grievance. What is it?

Mrs. N. Nor have I a grievance. But I think, as a mother——

Mr. N. (*aside.*) Now for something pleasant. "Mother's" always the cue for malice.

Mrs. N. As a mother, I may be allowed to say that you should keep your word with the children, and not teach them to look upon your most sacred promises as idle words.

Mr. N. (*aside.*) Said so. (*Aloud.*) Putting this and that together, Maria, I gather that you accuse

me of having made some promise about the new opera.

Mrs. N. And of having broken it. That is all. But as I said, you are the master of the house, you have the purse, and our enjoyments are dependent on your will and pleasure. We have no right to murmur at your caprices.

Mr. N. (*restraining himself.*) You are a sweet creature, and you have the gift of saying sweet things. But I begin to recall something of the sort.

Mrs. N. I am glad of that.

Mr. N. Why should you be glad? If anybody has been disappointed I am sorry, but the whole business went out of my head. You should have reminded me.

Mrs. N. (*with a laugh.*) O, thank you, no. I have had too much experience of the sort of reception any little hint of that kind meets. I am not always in a state to be scowled and stormed at.

Mr. N. (*angrily.*) Tell me what I promised, and when.

Mrs. N. (*submissively.*) It is really of no consequence, Henry. What signifies the addition of one dull evening to so many?

Mr. N. May I ask you to answer me?

Mrs. N. It does seem so strange that you

should have forgotten, but if you say that you have, of course I cannot disprove it.

Mr. N. (*dangerously.*) I promised—*what?*

Mrs. N. You do not remember that wonderfully clever and sparkling thing in *Punch*—the plot of the *Africaine,* with the most extraordinary illustrations by that gifted artist Mr. Du Maurier? How odd! The children were enchanted with it, learned it by heart, and played it before Mr. Snotchley and the Baltimores. It was a perfect success.

Mr. N. I was not present.

Mrs. N. Well then, perfect with that drawback. But I mentioned it to you, and you immediately said that they should see the real opera when it should come out. I admit that I was rather surprised at such a liberal promise, but once made, should it not have been kept?

Mr. N. It went out of my head, I tell you, and you ought to have reminded me.

Mrs. N. (*only smiles deprecatingly.*)

Mr. N. Certainly you should all have gone. At least I would have tried to get a box, though on a first night of a new work by Meyerbeer, boxes were no doubt at a premium. But the truth is that I forgot all about it.

Mrs. N. Quite natural that you should.

Mr. N. I understand you, Maria. Perhaps, however, you may some day discover that on that very Saturday I remembered my children to a better end than taking them to a theatre. But I have long since ceased to make confidences where they are received without sympathy and gratitude.

Mrs. N. (*humbly.*) I am very sorry, dear Henry, that you should think us ungrateful. I am sure that we are much obliged to you for food and raiment, and all that you are so good as to give us.

Mr. N. (*white.*) I believe that I am too severe in wishing the punishment of flogging inflicted on husbands of the lower class who are nagged into striking their wives. I myself, with all the advantages of education, habit, and self-command, find it difficult to abstain from using a very strong expression. However, that is over.

Mrs. N. I will take care to remember what I have escaped, Henry, and avoid such risks. I would not have mentioned the opera, if I had thought that reminding you of a promise to the little ones would have put you into such a rage. But (*smiling*), if you are hot, your coffee is cold. Send your cup across. I see that the season is nearly over. I will keep the papers from the children, and they will perhaps forget all about it.

Mr. N. They shall do nothing of the kind, for

the *Africaine* is played again to-morrow, and I will get a box.

Mrs. N. A single stall would be cheaper, dear, and you will hear as well, and see better.

Mr. N. A stall?

Mrs. N. For yourself. We are all going to Mr. Snotchley's, who has promised, after tea, to read *Rasselas* to us, and he reads so beautifully (not theatrically, as you do), that I want the children to have the treat.

Mr. N. Snotchley and *Rasselas;* and they are to be kept from real enjoyment for that! I shall take them myself.

Mrs. N. Not, I trust, against their own consent as well as their mother's.

Mr. N. Do you want to make me believe that they would sooner go and sit in a stuck-up room, hearing an old frump drone over the dullest book in the world, than go to the theatre and see a fine show?

Mrs. N. If my superintendence of their education has been efficient, they would prefer foregoing an amusement to committing a rudeness. But I will ask them presently, and I will tell you their answer.

Mr. N. No, don't. I am aware of what it will be. Don't teach *them* hypocrisy. It's early days

for that. What night are they not liable to be bored by Snotchley? The opera is played on Thursday, and again on Saturday, which is the last night of the season.

Mrs. N. You refused to let me accept Mrs. Baltimore's invitation for Thursday, because you said you were engaged at a business dinner.

Mr. N. I forget what I said in my desperation, when I was driven into a corner to avoid a man who gives South African wine.

Mrs. N. That seems fastidious in a man who likes Hungarian and Greek wines.

Mr. N. Just a woman's nonsensical talk. Because I don't like one novelty I mustn't like another. I wish I may never drink worse liquid than my Hymet, or my Erlauer. Snotchley himself praised them.

Mrs. N. He is a gentleman, and would not dispraise your wine at your own table.

Mr. N. But he would behind my back, you mean. I believe that.

Mrs. N. Henry, a gentleman puts the best construction on language, until he is quite certain that a worse was intended. I mean that Mr. Snotchley could not help speaking well of what you were giving him, and, I must say, were yourself praising, which was not in the best taste.

Mr. N. I beg your pardon. I shouldn't praise my own house, or my own furniture, or my own wife, or my own children.

Mrs. N. You never did the last two things. I acquit you there.

Mr. N. If I don't talk, I'm a beggar to think, like the Welshman's owl. But as I was going to say, wine is a sacred thing, and not subject to conventionalities. If a man gives me bad, I'll tell him it's bad, and *vice versâ*, and if he is offended, he is not a man whom I desire to know in this world or any other. And I will speak about my own wine as frankly.

Mrs. N. As you scarcely ever give a party, it does not much matter.

Mr. N. We've had six or seven since Easter. And you always ask the same people, who sit in the same places, and tell the same stories. And after hearing Snotchley relate for the seventh time how his grandfather picked up George the Third's walking-stick on Windsor Terrace, the fierce excitement of that narrative somewhat abates.

Mrs. N. I like old friends, and I do not expect you to like the tone of good society.

Mr. N. Your good society's tone is rather a monotone—which reminds me that we were talking of an opera. I will get the box for Thursday.

Mrs. N. Believing you truthful in saying that you were engaged, I arranged to take the children to the St. Winkle and St. Welk Schools, to hear a lecture by a missionary from the South Sea Islands.

Mr. N. Have they been so *very* naughty?

Mrs. N. Who, the islanders?

Mr. N. No, the children.

Mrs. N. What do you mean?

Mr. N. Two severe punishments in one week, *Rasselas*, and a missionary! I am sorry they are growing up so demoralised.

Mrs. N. I can joke on any subject but the moral characters of my children. I do not mind being sneered at for my attempts to improve them.

Mr. N. *Rasselas* was dull enough, but the author was honest and the English is highly superior, but a fat missionary with a pack of cant about savages whom he perhaps never saw, or perhaps sold rum to, is really not a party to come between the children and the opera.

Mrs. N. They heard you say you were engaged.

Mr. N. Then I shall say that my engagement is off.

Mrs. N. Two falsehoods—the first to your friend, the second to your children.

Mr. N. I like that from you, who told Mrs.

Silverdale that we were going out of town on Monday.

Mrs. N. That is just what I expected. A wife struggles to save her husband's credit, and her excuses are dashed in her face.

Mr. N. My credit! What next?

Mrs. N. Every person will have left town next week, except those who are detained by pecuniary difficulties. I dare not ask whether this is your case, because any reference to such things draws on me a storm of insult, but I did not desire that the Silverdales should suspect it.

Mr. N. (*conscious of a good balance.*) Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! You should have lived in the days of the Chevalier D'Eon, my dear. I am sure you would have beaten him when he was a fencing-mistress.

Mrs. N. (*mollified.*) There is what my late uncle used to call a metallic ring in that laugh, Henry, which does not speak badly for the children's future.

Mr. N. (*pretending not to be pleased.*) That is neither here nor there. But that phrase was rather neat in the late lamented acc——

Mrs. N. Henry!

Mr. N. Accelerator of existence. By the way, did you notice that the excellent Locock is not

elected for the Isle of Wight? That eminent accoucheur yields to a believer in the Immaculate Conception.

Mrs. N. If you can introduce an insult to my family, I am sure of hearing it.

Mr. N. Where's the insult? I can't say I respect your uncle's memory, because it was so bad that he forgot to leave you anything——

Mrs. N. Club jokes are very flat by daylight.

Mr. N. Yes, daylight has its advantages for old jokes and old——(*sees the chastening eye*)——old clothes. Talking whereof, we'll go and hear the grand old Jew on Thursday.

Mrs. N. I have already mentioned our engagement.

Mr. N. Then, for the last time, what do you say to Saturday?

Mrs. N. I object to going out on Saturday nights. It is usually impossible to reach this door before twelve o'clock, and then it is Sunday.

Mr. N. Riding in a carriage is not wrong on Sunday, is it? You did not say so when we were going to the Star and Garter yesterday.

Mrs. N. The Star and Garter is not a theatre, so your sophistical argument entirely falls to the ground.

Mr. N. Then we'll leave it there, and now that

the subject has been discussed, we'll drop it. You will make the children understand that you and not I have prevented their seeing the *Africaine*, and that *Rasselas*, Fat Missionry, and Cant stop the way. I will tell you on Wednesday what I think of the Opera.

Mrs. N. You don't mean to say that you would go by yourself?

Mr. N. You advised it just now, and your advice is good. I mean to take it.

Mrs. N. No, take a box for Thursday, you cross old thing.

Mr. N. And the Fat Missionary?

Mrs. N. Well, if you think there is any doubt about his having been to the South Seas, we might be encouraging humbug.

Mr. N. And that should never be encouraged, Madam.

[*Winks, and exit, and they all heard L'Africaine, and rave about* LUCCA.

XXI.—ON RETURN FROM THE COUNTRY.

MR. *and* MRS. NAGGLETON *have been spending a few days at the House of a Friend in a Southern County. They have returned to-day, and converse after a late dinner.*

Mr. Naggleton (*holding up his wineglass*). I drink your health, Mrs. Naggleton, and congratulate you upon your safe return to your household gods.

Mrs. N. Don't talk nonsense, and above all, heathenish nonsense.

Mr. N. Well, we will say your household goods. There's no harm in that, especially as furniture is one of your idols.

Mrs. N. I have no idols, and I do not see why a woman is to be sneered at for wishing her house —her *husband's* house—to be properly furnished. You certainly lose no time in throwing off the mask which you have been wearing for three days.

Mr. N. I only wish I had worn one, for I am scorched worse than the sole we have been trying to eat.

Mrs. N. It was not the cook's fault. She had not known that we were coming, and then she was ordered to get a dinner in a hurry.

Mr. N. And why did she not know?

Mrs. N. Because she was not written to.

Mr. N. And why was she not written to?

Mrs. N. Because you, with your usual ridiculous indecision, could not say which day you would leave Mr. Appledram's.

Mr. N. I like that. I do like that. When you yourself were watching and dodging to find out whether the Appledrams were going to give a dinner-party while we stayed. You only agreed to go when you found that it was a hopeless date —next week, or you would have stopped till now.

Mrs. N. Of course I misconducted myself. I always do. Of course I scorched the sole.

Mr. N. Never mind about misconduct. The sole, yes, because when you had actually succeeded in making up your mind, you would not let me telegraph.

Mrs. N. Telegraph to a cook!

Mr. N. Why not? Ha! ha! She has a battery de quizeen of her own. Ha! ha!

Mrs. N. We are at home, Henry, and there is no further excuse for the childish nonsense which you have been drivelling for three days.

Mr. N. Well, we must all laugh sometimes. I thought that we had been tolerably jolly.

Mrs. N. To be laughed with is one thing, but it is another for a wife to sit and hear her husband laughed at.

Mr. N. (*getting angry and rude.*) He deserved to be laughed at for taking such a wet blanket into the country with him. No I retract. I did not mean that—I take it back. But you *are* a refrigerator, you know, or what it is now the fashion to call a thermantidote.

Mrs. N. Don't resume the mask; be as insulting as you please.

Mr. N. What nonsense you talk about masks. What do you mean?

Mrs. N. Hypocrisy, Henry, has been described as the tribute which Vice pays to Virtue. But the tribute is too often paid in bad money.

Mr. N. My wig! but that's an epigram of the first water. I saw that you were reading a good deal in the country.

Mrs. N. I can smile at such a taunt, Henry. I don't affect smartness. It would not do for both of us to be pretenders to wit.

Mr. N. (*floored.*) Very good, I'm sure, very good and very affectionate and wife-like.

Mrs. N. How you fly out at the slightest

attempt at retort upon your eternal attacks. But I am told that such is the way with joke-makers of a certain order; they are the most thin-skinned creatures going.

Mr. N. I am not flying out, though I was never much more inclined to go out.

Mrs. N. Pray do not let me detain you. I hope I can make allowance for what you must have undergone in being obliged to be civil to your wife from Saturday to Wednesday.

Mr. N. I should always be civil to you, and a good deal more, if you would let me, but your temper is so extraordinary that you construe a kind speech into a wrong, and turn it off with a pleasant mixture of sarcasm and ice—not delightful even in weather like this.

Mrs. N. Remember that you are drinking your own wine, which is fiery, and not like Mr. Appledram's.

Mr. N. Do you mean that I am excited?

Mrs. N. I simply mean to give you a caution, as you are speaking fast, and with needless violence.

Mr. N. (*self-conqueror.*) Appledram's wine is very good, but it is neither better nor even dearer than mine. Shall I fill your glass?

Mrs. N. No, I thank you. If your taste does

not detect the difference, mine does; and after taking his for some days, I would rather keep to water for a time.

Mr. N. (*smiling.*) No, no, Maria, second Mrs. Naggleton, M'm—you shall not stir me up again on the wine question. You are a first-rate authority, of course; your esteemed aunt, from whose house I had the honour of marrying you, keeping such a splendid cellar at the bottom of her wardrobe.

Mrs. N. The remark is manly. And you are perfectly well aware that my aunt has ample means, and that it was upon conscientious motives that she would not lay away money in a cellar.

Mr. N. I respect her motives, but cuss her Marsala.

Mrs. N. You are not asked to drink it.

Mr. N. No, I have that luck, certainly.

Mrs. N. Though a father might have been unselfish enough to put up with the harmless whim of an old lady who could do much for his children, and he might have paid her an occasional visit.

Mr. N. I have heard and read a good many odd things, but I know no nation that makes it incumbent on a father to poison himself for the sake of

his offspring. But I have frequently told you that you could visit the old creature whenever you pleased.

Mrs. N. I trust that I need no permission to visit my relations?

Mr. N. But you don't go.

Mrs. N. That is my business.

Mr. N. What's the good of talking stuff? You know, as well as I do, that her idiotic will is made.

Mrs. N. Wills may be done away, I believe.

Mr. N. Good gracious, partner of my bosom and expenses! Do you suggest to me a terrible crime? Are you a *Lady Macbeth?* Would you have me go down to your devotional but disagreeable old aunt, make her Marsala worse than it is by an infusion of laudanum worse than her conversation, discover her will in a disused nightcap, and destroy aunt, will, and cap at one fell swoop? No, it is tempting, but tempt me not.

Mrs. N. If you have finished that ranting, which is not in the least like Mr. Buckstone——

Mr. N. It is an excellent imitation, now.

Mrs. N. You think so, and are told so, I dare say, at the Club, when you have provided drink for the members, but you really have no power of imitation.

Mr. N. It is a great story, for I imitate one person to perfection.

Mrs. N. Who may that be?

Mr. N. Job.

Mrs. N. I request that you will not be wicked.

Mr. N. My dear, it was not Job who was that, but another member of the household, according to Shakespeare.

Mrs. N. Shakespeare had better have avoided such topics, and many others; but you will fly out again if I venture to say that *he* was anything short of perfection. Mr. Snotchley says that is an article of faith with people who get sentimental in taverns.

Mr. N. Mr. Snotchley is an ass and a prig. Snotchley on Shakespeare is a treat. Don't quote his folly to me.

Mrs. N. (*smiling.*) I said so.

Mr. N. Said what?

Mrs. N. That you would grow violent, if a word was said against your superstition. Never mind, I will be more considerate of your feelings than you are of mine, and not make fun of your idols.

Mr. N. (*seriously.*) The woman who speaks lightly of Shakespeare is—

Mrs. N. Your wife, and not in the habit of being shouted at, nor will she bear it.

Mr. N. I wasn't shouting.

Mrs. N. You don't know what you are doing, I think. Do put the stopper into that bottle.

Mr. N. We have had three pleasant days, Maria, and I think you need not have finished the out with a row.

Mrs. N. The Out with a Row. I don't know whether it is true that we always return to our first loves——

Mr. N. I wish some of us did!

Mrs. N. Gentlemanly! But I am sure that we return to our first language. You must fancy yourself in the time of my predecessor in the dignity of your wife.

Mr. N. No, my imagination is not so strong as that, in the presence of evidence to the contrary.

Mrs. N. Yes, surely, you must, and that you have just returned by a twopenny boat from Greenwich, after an elegant repast on tea and periwinkles. Don't weep at the sweet recollection. The Out with a Row.

Mr. N. (*condensing his rage*). My first wife had her faults, I dare say——

Mrs. N. I really have no desire to enter into the biography of that person.

Mr. N. But you shall hear, Madam, once for

all. She was considerate, affectionate, and playful——

Mrs. N. Playful darling.

Mr. N. And as unlike you in manner and talk as possible.

Mrs. N. I trust so. I hope so. I am delighted to hear it.

Mr. N. She was a very good wife, Madam, mind that. You are——

Mrs. N. I am—what, Sir?

Mr. N. (*with a vast effort.*) The wife of a very good husband, Madam, who will be d——d if he will stand this sort of thing. I do not know what time I shall be home to-night, but I have the key, and if *anybody* is up when I return, I will discharge *every servant* before ten to-morrow.

[*Leaves the house.*

XXII.—ON GREENWICH.

The SCENE *is the Coffee-Room at the Ship, Greenwich. The London Season is over, nevertheless nearly all the tables are occupied. The Distinguished Couple have the little table near the large one in the bow window.*

Mr. Naggleton. Is the flounder zoodje to your taste?

Mrs. N. O, of course, I like everything. I come to such places far too seldom to presume to be critical.

Mr. N. That is the true secret of enjoyment.

Mrs. N. I hate secrets.

Mr. N. You keep one very well.

Mrs. N. What may that be?

Mr. N. Il segreto per esser infelice.

Mrs. N. What a torture it is to hear you try to speak Italian, Henry.

Mr. N. I beg pardon, I'm sure. I forgot that I was talking to the translator of Cary's Dante —of Dante, I mean. Now, some of the salmon zoodje? I assure you it's very good.

Mrs. N. Good enough for me, I suppose, but not for you, as you turn up your nose at it.

Mr. N. I'm not very hungry, and I am reserving myself for the whitebait.

Mrs. N. I should wonder if you *were* hungry.

Mr. N. True, for I made an excellent breakfast.

Mrs. N. I don't mean that, and you know it.

Mr. N. I am sure you mean something pleasant—in return take some lobster cutlet. Your health, my dear.

Mrs. N. Pray do not take wine without eating. You are not in your own house now, and you ought to be careful.

Mr. N. No fear, the wine here is very good—your health, again, in the driest of Sherry. Don't send away that fish pudding, it looks insipid, but it's very delicate.

Mrs. N. (*in a fierce whisper.*) I shall take nothing else, unless you behave like any other husband. What do you mean by sticking me in my chair like a child, and telling me to take this, that, and the other, while you only look on amused?

Mr. N. Well, we came out for amusement, didn't us? However, here is something that suits *this* child,—the salmon cutlet and pickles. What

Valet, fill those glasses up to the top, and let us see the beaded bubbles winking at the brim. Your health again, Mrs. Naggleton. Is not that good lining for human nature?

Mrs. N. I am not partial to Champagne, especially at the wrong time. This is much better than our own, of course, but not better than we taste at other houses.

Mr. N. That's all you know about it— it's out and out.

Mrs. N. (*with a steady look.*) The thing for an "Out," then.

Mr. N. (*The fact is that he was a little ashamed of a certain scene, and this dinner is a kind of peace-offering.*) Let by-gones be by-gones, as the last horse said to the jockey at the Derby.

Mrs. N. The Derby! I wonder you recal that, then.

Mr. N. You will survive me, Maria, of course, but if I had to write your epitaph, I don't think I could be respectful to your memory. Some more whitebait?

Mrs. N. Why do you give me disagreeable things to remember?

Mr. N. This is one, I suppose?

Mrs. N. Do you expect me to be grateful for

being brought to Greenwich when everyone else is out of town?

Mr. N. Is it my fault that we remain in town? Are you going to throw your aunt at my head? I have told you that there's nothing serious the matter with that respectable Miss Flaggerty, but you insist on remaining.

Mrs. N. I know my duty to a relative whom I respect.

Mr. N. I have no objection, but do your duty without grumbling. And, as for the season, I am sure that there are several women in the room at this moment who are dressed better than yourself.

Mrs. N. That is a happy thought to console a woman with.

Mr. N. Ha! ha! More Champagne? Yes, it would have been a clumsy speech, certainly, only you can say with the vain Irish girl in the story, that this is not the dress you've got at home.

Mrs. N. (*in a low voice.*) These persons are mostly provincials.

Mr. N. You talk of them as if they were criminals—as Cornelius O'Dowd describes Cook's excursionists, who, he tells foreigners, are taken to be gradually dropped all over the Continent.

Mrs. N. They are quite unlike the class one would have met here a month ago.

Mr. N. Yes, they look healthy and happy, and are thoroughly enjoying themselves, poor unhappy creatures. Let us hope that some day they may know better things, sit down without appetite, eat without pleasure, drink without laughing, and go away worse bored than when they came.

Mrs. N. Those are your radical prejudices against the manners of the upper classes.

Mr. N. Let me give you some devilled bait. The fish are not what they were, but as the hymn says, Satan finds some whitebait still for Quartermaine to do. Hush! it is not wrong to joke about it. Dr. Watts was a Dissenter.

Mrs. N. You may sneer at my attachment to the Church of England.

Mr. N. I never did anything of the kind.

Mrs. N. But you cannot shake it.

Mr. N. Shake the church, my dear? I should be very sorry. But I wish the cook had given another shake of the pepper-pot.

Mrs. N. Your palate is vitiated, and requires unnatural stimulants. These fish are very hot.

Mr. N. Louis! Pweever! (Louis *instantly brings pepper.*)

Mrs. N. It was lucky that you gesticulated as

well as spoke, as he would never have known what you meant. Why not have spoken English ?

Mr. N. I preferred French.

Mrs. N. Then why not have spoken French ?

Mr. N. So I did.

Mrs. N. Your pronunciation is something awful.

Mr. N. I am glad that there is something awful about me, a ray of the Olympian Jove, as it were. How jolly good this Champagne is. I could drink it in oceans.

Mrs. N. How foolish you are ! I can see, now, how it is that you are led away by Wyndham Wareham and the Club lot, until you take much more than you ought, and come home as you did last night.

Mr. N. I was home before you, any how.

Mrs. N. What a subterfuge ! I was with the Baltimores at Alfred Mellon's Concert. You have no taste for good music. I suppose that you would go if you were allowed to smoke in the private boxes.

Mr. N. A Spanish gentleman showed me some cigars the other day, called *entreactos,* so even the horror you invent is not unpresident—unprecedented, I mean.

Mrs. N. I told you that you were taking too much wine.

Mr. N. You told me wrong then, for I was taking too little, and a sip went the wrong way and gave me the hiccup, or hiccough, as the purists spell it. Will you have some more duckling?

Mrs. N. I want nothing more.

Mr. N. No more do I, of course; but we don't come to Greenwich to eat what we want, but what we don't want. I have given you a quiet dinner, as you said you'd dine in the coffee-room, or we'd have had a private room and all the glories of Art.

Mrs. N. As when your sister and her husband were in town; but anything is good enough for a wife.

Mr. N. As if you did not insist on my rather going a-head that day.

Mrs. N. Your sister's tongue is venomous, and I did not wish her to go back and proclaim all over Derbyshire that we had taken her to dine in a public room.

Mr. N. Her betters do so—as at this present speaking.

Mrs. N. That is an artful way of turning it off; but I am not a fool.

Mr. N. On the contrary, my dear. The woman

who, having no particularly large show of what the world—mind, I only say the world—calls attractions or advantages, secured Henry Naggleton, and keeps him faithful and devoted—is a woman of extraordinary talent, and I drink her health. Now we'll have ices. Louis! Glaziers, sill vous play. (Louis *considers for the eleventh part of a second, and in eleven seconds brings the article.*) And, Louis, mention to Mr. Lawrence that I shall now be glad of a bottle of claret.

Mrs. N. You will not take more wine?

Mr. N. Won't I? We don't kill a pig every day.

Mrs. N. Henry, if you must say such things, say them under your breath. Several persons must have heard you, and fancied that you were in earnest.

Mr. N. Shall I rise and address them, my dear; explain that the words are the burden of an old song, that we do not keep swine, but are highly genteel people residing near Hyde Park, and in town at this unfashionable time only because a relative is supposed to be unwell.

Mrs. N. Oh, I am sure you have had wine enough.

Mr. N. So am I, which is why I am going to have a little more.

Mrs. N. I am very glad that there is no one here who knows us.

Mr. N. Just now you were regretting it.

Mrs. N. Just now you were sober.

Mr. N. I am as sober as could be expected in the melancholy circumstances of the case; the Ship's good wine, and your temper, which I will respectfully describe as corked.

Mrs. N. I shall remember being brought here to be scolded.

Mr. N. The kettle began it.

Mrs. N. Civil, to call your wife a kettle.

Mr. N. I only quoted. Besides, if we come to consider it, the kettle's the brightest ornament of the fireside, and the guardian angel of our tea and our grog. Sweet idea that.

Mrs. N. Henry, do pay the bill, leave that wine, and come home.

Mr. N. (*hums.*)

> "He that leaveth wine like this,
> Is a fool whom men should hiss."

Do you know that I'm not certain whether that is a line from some great German poet, or my own original inspiration. But it's truly happy; so am I.

Mrs. N. I will ask for the bill.

Mr. N. If you do, you shall pay it. I'm certain that bit of poetry is either mine or Martin Luther's.

Mrs. N. What a condition you must be in to talk of Martin Luther making poetry in praise of drink!

Mr. N. What a condition you must be in to forget his famous hymn:

> "Who loves not wine, woman, and song,
> He is a fool his whole life long."

Mrs. N. I don't believe Luther ever made such stuff.

Mr. N. Tell you he did—Martin had a good Swallow.

Mrs. N. (*justly disgusted.*) I am going to put my bonnet on, and trust that you will be ready on my return. (*As she goes.*) The bill to that gentleman, Louis. [*Exit.*

Mr. N. (*hazily musing*). I suppose it's her nature. We've no right to quarrel with nature, because she is the mother of us all. Somebody says that if you expel nature with a fork, she will come back. Very rude way to treat the mother of us all—as if she was an old cow trespassing into a field. What a lovely colour claret is! It's half in the eye, is wine, I believe. But it's a curious problem, and I have never been able to dissolve it

—solve it—why wine always tastes better anywhere but in your own house. Man seems to be doing a foolish, undomestic thing in emptying his own cellar. Human nature again—go where you will, nature comes in like the black horseman sitting behind Care. And Care killed a cat. I wish he'd come and live in the mews behind our house, where the cats flirt to that extent that there's no sleeping. I am sleepy enough now, that's certain.

Re-enter MRS. NAGGLETON.

Mrs. N. You have paid the bill, of course, and ordered the fly.

Mr. N. (*arousing.*) All in good time. Louis! Bill and fly. Or stop. Fly and no bill. Send up bill to my office—they know me.

MRS. N. *observes that this direction is perfectly satisfactory, and immediately founds divers theories as to visits here of which she has known nothing. But the business of the moment is to get away to the most detestable railway station in the world, and so*

[*Exeunt.*

XXXIII.—ON THEIR EXTINCTION.

Lunch Time. At that unaccustomed hour, the master of the house (MR. NAGGLETON) *has returned from the City. He has impatiently partaken of some sardines and toast, and is even more impatiently disposing of a glass or two of Chablis.*

Mr. Naggleton. Now, can't you say what you have to say?

Mrs. N. Have you finished lunch?

Mr. N. I never take any, as you know. What on earth is this mystery?

Mrs. N. You received my telegram?

Mr. N. Why, of course I did, or I shouldn't be here.

Mrs. N. O, I don't know. I sent it entirely on speculation, as I had no idea where you might be.

Mr. N. Where should I be at twelve in the day but at business? Did you suppose I was on the top of the Monument, or in the middle of next week?

Mrs. N. The message reached you, and that is enough. Now ring, please.

Mr. N. What for?

Mrs. N. To have the things taken away.

Mr. N. Let 'em stop. Will you tell me why you have sent for me?

Mrs. N. Do you wish the servant to come in, in the middle of our conversation?

Mr. N. O, is it going to have a middle? Well, have your way.

[*Rings, and the table is cleared, to the accompaniment, performed by* MR. NAGGLETON, *of the tattoo popularly dedicated to the* Écrasé *of* LORD WESTBURY.

Mrs. N. (*to the Servant.*) We are at home to *nobody.* [*Exit Servant.*

Mr. N. Who would call at such an hour?

Mrs. N. I cannot say. I have had one visitor already.

Mr. N. Now, Maria, you have not been absurd enough to call me away from business because some tax-gatherer has left a paper, or any nonsense of that kind? I was particularly engaged.

Mrs. N. I am sorry that you leave the house exposed to any such scandal, but that is not the business now.

Mr. N. You *do* look serious, though.—None of the children—pooh—you'd have told me on the instant.

Mrs. N. I am glad that you do me some justice.

Mr. N. Bother—what's the matter?

Mrs. N. Nothing. At least that is not the word.

Mr. N. Then I wish "sharp" was.

Mrs. N. Do not begin with levity. This is not a time for it.

Mr. N. You have something to tell me?

Mrs. N. I have.

[*Fetches a writing-case, and takes out a paper, evidently of a legal character.*

Mr. N. Are you going to make your will?

Mrs. N. (*with a serious smile.*) It is curious that you should have used that expression. (*Sits.*) Henry, the event which I expected has occurred.

Mr. N. (*dazed*). But you expect so many events —some of them must occur occasionally.

Mrs. N. You have frequently—I may say habitually—taunted me with the remark that my family have estranged themselves from us.

Mr. N. I have never complained of it, at all events. I rather like it.

Mrs. N. A wife understands many things, said by her husband, of which she feels it best to take no notice.

Mr. N. Agreed—especially when he hints at any little domestic reforms.

Mrs. N. You will regret introducing this tone into our conversation.

Mr. N. (*growing angry.*) I may regret introducing another tone if you don't make haste and tell me what you are driving at.

Mrs. N. READ THAT?

[*Places the paper in his hands.*

Mr. N. A lawyer's handwriting! Am I cited before Sir James Wilde? Eh! (*reads.*) I—I beg your pardon, Maria, I'm sure (*reads on*). Then you were right in remaining in town.

Mrs. N. Yes.

Mr. N. Well, she was a good old soul, in spite of her eccentricities. I always rather liked her, poor Henrietta Flaggerty, though she hated me.

Mrs. N. Forbear to judge until you have read that extract from her will.

Mr. N. Remembered the children, has she? Good old thing!

Mrs. N. She has remembered their parents.

Mr. N. Let us see.

[*Reads to the end of the paper, then lays it down, and gazes in a singular manner at his wife. She returns the gaze for some moments, and then begins to cry.* MR. NAGGLETON *takes up the paper, and retires to a sequestered chair to re-peruse. He then comes back to his former seat.*

Mr. N. Well, Maria?

Mrs. N. Well, Henry?

Mr. N. By Jove!

Mrs. N. (*half smiling.*) How do you like it?

Mr. N. (*in a low voice.*) She was all right, I suppose?

Mrs. N. (*with the woman's quick apprehension where worldly advantage is concerned, and bless 'em for it.*) Oh, yes! as sane as you are.

Mr. N. (*Goes to door and opens it suddenly; then closes it again.*) As I said before—well?

Mrs. N. What made you do that?

Mr. N. Servants are curious.

Mrs. N. Not such as mine, I trust. But never mind that, now. What do you say to Aunt Flaggerty's will?

Mr. N. What am I to say?

Mrs. N. Nay, it is a case for your decision, Henry.

Mr. N. Do you mean that?

Mrs. N. Do I ever say anything that I don't mean?

Mr. N. I hope so; I often do. But, seriously?

Mrs. N. (*smiling.*) Seriously.

Mr. N. (*snatching up paper.*) "Twenty thousand pounds, on two conditions, one of which shall be enforced by my executors, the other of

which I must leave to the honour of Henry Naggleton and Maria, his wife."

Mrs. N. Now, is not that conceived in the spirit of a lady?

Mr. N. She was a lady, and I am sorry to have to speak of her in the past tense. The first condition is—

Mrs. N. Read the second, first, dear.

Mr. N. "That they entirely and for ever abandon their habit of scolding, snarling, and sneering, and study to converse politely, if not affectionately." I thought we always did.

Mrs. N. O, you story. And, now the other condition.

Mr. N. "That they immediately discard the name of Naggleton, and assume, and for ever hereafter bear the name of ——." My dear Maria!

Mrs. N. (*laughing.*) Read it out, Sir.

Mr. N. "The name of Lovey-Dovey."

Mrs. N. (*slowly.*) Lovey-Dovey.

Mr. N. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. N. My dear Henry, what a noise.

Mr. N. Noise! I should think so. My respected Maria, when a man is suddenly called upon to abandon a proud name which has been borne by three generations of members of the

Coalscutters' Company, and I do not know how many cavaliers, crusaders, and cannibals in the previous ages, it is time for him to make a noise.

Mrs. N. This means that the conditions are Accepted.

Mr. N. They are frightfully hard, of course, but then consider the children. Twenty thousand pounds, added to the eleven and fourpence, or whatever other trifle I may have managed to put into the Post-office Savings' Bank, is money.

Mrs. N. It *is* money, dear, and do not joke when we speak of the children's welfare.

Mr. N. I was never less inclined to joke in my life. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

Mrs. N. Hush, dear; you will really have the servants up if you go on like that.

Mr. N. Lovey-Dovey ! I tell you what, we'll travel on the Continent.

Mrs. N. I should like it of all things; but what for ?

Mr. N. We should break ourselves gradually into the name. Monsieur et Madame L'Auvé D'Auvé would not be so bad.

Mrs. N. Would that be honourable ?

Mr. N. The name condition is not the one upon honour.

Mrs. N. Ah! but would it be safe?

Mr. N. That's another pair of breach — of breech-loaders.

Mrs. N. Twenty thousand pounds! How much is that a-year, dear?

Mr. N. Why, not exactly a fortune in Consols, but something that if we place it properly, will double itself as fast as a woman doubles a scandal.

Mrs. N. Ah, there! You mustn't talk like that, Henry, if we are to fulfil the terms.

Mr. N. What? That's a very liberal rendering of the will, Maria. Penal statutes are construed literally. There's only one woman whom I am never to scold, and as I never did, the abstinence will be no privation. Come here.

Mrs. N. Oh, you great goose. (*Coming, however.*) But there!

[*This line is inexplicable by the Editor.*

Mr. N. It will be a severe trial to you, my poor Maria; but I must aid you with my masculine resolution and forbearance.

Mrs. N. (*boxes his ears*). As if you did not always begin. Well, then, that is settled, and you had better write to the executors telling them that we accept the legacy. How do people take new names?

Mr. N. Anyhow. If you like, you can pay

your Sovereign eighty-two pounds fifteen shillings for a Royal Licence, and if you prefer keeping the money, you can adopt your new name, and pay nothing at all.

Mrs. N. I suppose that it would be most respectable to have the Royal Licence.

Mr. N. Why don't you go and ask the genteel Snotchley?

Mrs. N. Now, Henry, is that right?

Mr. N. No, it isn't. I withdraw the Snotchley. But we haven't begun the new régime yet. I think we may go on as before until the money is forked over.

Mrs. N. The sooner we begin the easier it will be.

Mr. N. And we are both in very good tempers, so there is a platform for a good start. And so, my dear Mrs. Lovey-Dovey, I salute you by your new name. [*Salutes exchanged.*

Mrs. N. And are you serious about travelling?

Mr. N. Have you not often wished to see Rome?

Mrs. N. Ah, *my* wishes have been too often (*recovers herself*) granted by a kind husband for me to insist on anything he dislikes.

Mr. N. But I don't dislike it, and we'll go, and look after that shawl which you thought proper to

sell (*recovers himself*), and very properly too, for to tell the truth, I never much liked it, though I fancied you did.

Mrs. N. Rome! That will be delightful. And long before we come back, all the talk about this affair will be over.

Mr. N. Yes, our dear five hundred friends will have swallowed their envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness.

Mrs. N. Don't make fun of such words, Henry, —though you do make me laugh, and you ought not, dear.

Mr. N. Quite right, though I mean nothing wrong.

Mrs. N. I am sure of that. Well, will you write the letter. And then, will you order some cards with the new name. It's very absurd, but I shan't feel that I have secured the legacy until I have sent cards to everybody I know.

Mr. N. We'll put Twenty Thousand Pounds in a corner, and call the whole business Our Golden Wedding. May we live to keep a real one.

Mrs. N. Amen, with all my heart.

[*And so ends the History of the Naggletons, but you shall have one peep at the Lovey-Doveys.*

MISS VIOLET AND HER "OFFERS."

MISS VIOLET AND HER "OFFERS."

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

From OLD BROMPTON *to his Daughter.*

"MY DEAREST CHILD,—I can refuse you nothing —nothing, at least, in reason; and Violet Brompton is not the girl to ask what her father should not grant. For, whatever resemblance a too partial world may have discovered between myself and Phœbus Apollo, I have neither a mail phaeton in my coach-house, nor a female Phaeton in my drawing-room. And if my Violet, following in her father's incendiary footsteps, should succeed in setting the world on fire, I am sure it will be done only in the spirit in which, a very few years ago, she used to set fire to her snapdragons, that

her friends might be able to see and snatch the richest and best of the plums in the blaze.

"You wish to publish. Aged twenty, next May; you have seen so much that you must tell something. You would be my little Special Correspondent from the Offer-producing Districts. You want me to emulate the magician whom I and Mr. Lane saw at Cairo. I am to let an innocent child take ink into its hand, and then make revelations of sights it has seen. Be it so; but be sure that your ink is of the right sort, or your revelations will be apocryphal. Mind, I will have no blue ink, to produce a story like * * *, full of Latin and Greek quotations (for the most part, however, redeemed into womanliness by misspelling); nor red ink, for a dashing narrative of the loves of Her Majesty's army, like * * *; no, nor Cabinet ink, for a tale of a lover in Opposition, and a heart broken by the division-bell, like * * *. Nor, Violet, Daughter of the Magician, must the ink you take into your white hand be a mere contemptible 'writing fluid;' a pitiful negation authorship should repudiate. Ink is no mere 'writing fluid,' but has properties and virtues of its own, and has even a better pedigree to show than the holy oil with which the Church of Rome is preparing to oil her pet child, Louis, the Well-

beloved—oil miraculously brought direct from Heaven for the kings of France, and left till called for at the oilman's in the Rue St. Honoré, No. 37 *bis*. Ink has a better pedigree than that. See that yours, my child, be thoroughbred. Enough of iron to keep your down-strokes steady as Sir Paxton's columns, enough of gum-arabic to serve as bird-lime for winged thoughts (some people's fly away very unkindly, when they ought to settle on the paper), and only just enough of galls—which are but the results of morbid action —vegetable pearls, you know—to ornament your page in the fashion of the day. For, in the matter of fashion, I would not have you a literary Bloomer; I should be loath to expose you to the overpowering Epilogues of the Westminster boys, whose education (as described by Lord William Lennox) gives them a readiness of satire which no lady nearer them than is Billingsgate, could meet with equal weapons. I shall not quarrel with your literary millinery, my love, any more than I have ever quarrelled with certain bills, at which, while I tested their arithmetic, Madame St. Moelline sitting by, smiling unconcernedly, but ready as a cat for defence, you would look up, half afraid papa might think those last four or five dresses a little too extravagant.

"You shall publish. But not, I think, my beloved child, precisely as you propose. You tell me, in your note, that you want your 'book' to be prettily bound, with golden flowers crawling over the back; and if the edge of the 'book' cannot be gilt, you will graciously compromise for a gilding on the top edges only. And in your P.S. you say, you must dedicate your 'book' to him who——but I will keep your secret. But a book!

"No, my dear. A maiden speech should not be long. Even when it is on the Address, and the speaker is blazing in a yeomanry uniform (the more decorously to review a Minister's awkward squad), a great nation is not much softened by the exertions of the military tailor, and is ungrateful to the 'echo,' if its repetitions are too numerous. An *aria d'intrata* should not last through a whole evening. And so with a young lady's first attempt at authorship. You shall gain, by degrees, upon the public, my affectionate child. You know the *Vicar of Wakefield* by heart? Well, it was Miss Olivia Primrose that burst upon people and astonished them, while Miss Sophia won upon them and charmed them. You remember the result. Mrs. Thornhill was left a sort of widow bewitched —while Mrs. George Primrose, and her gallant young officer—— But you are already convinced,

Violet; and Oliver Goldsmith has wrought another of his charming conversions. I wonder out of which of the novelists of the present day, future papas will be able to convert their daughters to wisdom! I suppose they will be driven to translate George Sand.

"So, Violet, it shall be thus. I will do for you what I would not do for a great many titled ladies I could name; and would name, but for making a hundred ancestral halls unhappy, by contradicting the assertions of their lovely owners—that they 'write for *Punch*.' Do you start at the name, as at the sound of a silver trumpet? The remarkable, the extraordinary man—pooh! The preternatural creature, or shall I say being, who owns that name, also owns your father as his intimate friend. I have not, hitherto, boasted of this, for there is pride enough in this world; but the secret is now yours. Yes, my friend *Punch* shall be your literary sponsor—he will not refuse the office. Send him, each week, a chapter of your long and eventful life, and, who knows, by your twentieth birthday you may have made a 'book,' gold creepers and all. Speak freely; the world is your godfather's friend, and will, I am sure, be happy to make your acquaintance. It will be your own fault if that acquaintance be not kept up.

"Bless you, my child! Observe in these words another proof of my confidence in you, for you have my fatherly benediction before your confession begins.

"Your affectionate Parent,

"BRIDLEGOOSE BROMPTON."

CHAPTER II.

MR. ALBANY SWELLINGTON *to his Friend* BROWN.

"BROWN, MY BELOVED BUFFER,—[Brown. I interline a word or two at the beginning of my letter to say that I am heartily ashamed of what follows; in fact, I don't believe I wrote it, but it must stand to explain the rest.]

"There are headaches which a fellow can bear; and, by Jove, Brown, there are headaches which a fellow can't, shan't, won't, mustn't, and didn't ought to bear. I've got one of the latter sort, whereby this comes hopping from Brighton that you are all well, as it doesn't leave me at this present, and no mistake. I don't exactly know what I'm writing, and the lines seem to come down the page precious slowly. Didn't you expect me to dinner or something to-day? Well, I can't come. And I wish I could. Accept this apology, and believe me to remain yours, in a deuce of a state, A. S.

"How did it happen? The old way, of course. No, it was not, though! Harvey's fault it was, this time; Harvey did it all. I was in my room yesterday morning—it might have been about two in the day, for I had breakfasted early, and was smoking an innocent pipe, as I was going to write to my aunt, and I wanted to collect my reminiscences; she don't care to hear about dogs, and the odds on the Derby. In comes Harvey Botolph, wanting my stall at the Opera. Gave it him, (as there was nothing worth seeing) conditionally on his dictating a page of my aunt's letter; he knows about the Royal Academy, and new books, and fancy preachers—devilish well-informed fellow is Harvey. Got over the letter so fast, that I felt quite literary, and I think this helped to upset me. Dressed, and went round to Jem's, and saw some rats killed, but had nothing but pale ale. Club; Horace Clark and Wobble Wattle there, *en desespoir* (is that spelt right?) because a third fellow had thrown them over; and they bothered me to be the odd man to a dinner at Blackwall. It was a case just like all others; deuced stupid before champagne, and just the same after it, only noisier. Drank a great lot of everything, with the usual philanthropic intention, namely, to see if it would make me like my neighbour better. It

wouldn't. Got to town some way. Felt thirsty, so Wobby and I had some iced punch—a good deal, I believe, and cigars—and I think we went to some theatre, but I am not sure. Is there any play or opera in which a black chap smothers a woman in a bed? I have a faint notion of some such scene having passed before my eyes—it might have been the Ethiopian serenaders, and yet I don't remember any music. Anyhow, we were turned out of the place for making suggestions to the actors for the improvement of the spectacle, but theatrical folks are proverbially ungrateful. Where we went next, I don't know, there were police to be treated, and I think I had some beer. We went to a glove-fight somewhere, and Wobby being awfully cut, would spar, and was knocked under some grate, and may be there now for anything I know. I had a very extensive supper at the Cellars; in fact, two or three, for I kept forgetting that I had anything before, and was continually hungry, and paid for eight kidneys and five Welch rabbits, both of which things I hate, and I must have been rather queer to order them. I remember, too, tossing some fellows, Irishmen, for whiskey-and-water, and their taking me to some court, where five of them (I believe they were all Members of Parliament) lived in two rooms. We

were very jolly, and I was very much affected with their recitals of the oppression this country practises on Ireland. By Jove, it ought to be looked to. Then I don't pretend to know much more, but early this morning I found myself near London Bridge chaffing some men going to work. All of a sudden a bell rang—it was the first train to Brighton. I thought of the sea, and that it would be nice and cool; so I got into the train and went to sleep, and when I awoke, a porter was pulling me out at Brighton. That's how it happened, Brown, and you will see it was all Harvey's fault, finishing my aunt's letter so fast. By Jove, how my head aches!

"I've had some brandy and soda-water, and now I am scribbling because I have nothing else to do. Life's a mistake. The world's a humbug. Devilish ugly and care-worn all the people look here. They are walking about after breakfast. The sun shines right in one's eyes, making one savage. But I'll have a weed and walk about too. Perhaps I'll drown myself.

* * * *

"Brown, my dear friend. Everything is changed. The world's Paradise. Everybody is an angel, one person particularly. But I can't explain myself now. I have told you why I will

not cut out the above trash, but think no more of it. I want you to do a commission for me. It is important. Go to my rooms. Vincent knows you —(I don't think I shall keep Vincent, his morals are loose), and will let you do as you like. Do this. Take down all the pictures of ballet-dancers and all others that you would not hang up in your wife's room. Burn them, or send them to Wobby Wattle as my parting gift (I shall drop Wobby, but not till he comes into his money; at present he'd think it was for pecuniary reasons). Take everything connected with smoking out of the place, and let Vincent have fresh curtains put up. Tell Vincent to stop *Bell's Life*, and all other sporting papers. Put all my cards and dice into the fire, and do the same with all the books you can find—they won't be many. You may have my foils, masks, and sticks—I shall have no time for them in future. And if you will call upon some respectable law-bookseller, and ask him to go to my cousin, Erasmus Gherkin, Inner Temple, and send to my rooms, instantly, such books as Gherkin orders (I write to him by the Electric Telegraph), I shall be greatly obliged. And ascertain, if you can, what one has to pay to be made a barrister, and whether one can do it in half the time by paying or eating double, or both.

"You'll stare—I will explain shortly, but do the above in a crack. Is there not a song about Simple Simon and Iphigenia, going to a fair? I'm Simon, or however you spell it, but Iphigenia's name begins with 'V.' Now, look alive, there's a good Brown."

CHAPTER III.

It was considerably past high noon on a beautiful summer's day, during the earlier portion of the reign of the British Queen Victoria, when two individuals, of different sexes, were seen making their way, in an easterly direction, along the cliffs of Brighton. The sun shone out brightly; and, if the birds did not sing upon the trees, it was chiefly because there were no trees for them to sing upon. But the sea, dashing upon the shingles, made its own rough music; and, far away on the horizon line, the white sails of the fishing-boats, glistening in the light, might seem the wings of some preternatural beings, sentinelling the rock-bound island of the free.

I feel it right, as the authoress of these papers, to state that the above beautiful piece of writing is not my own, but was kindly given me, as a beginning, by a celebrated novelist of the day, who happened to call while I was puzzling my

poor little head how to commence my story befittingly. I am quite afraid that there will be no more like it, and that it will resemble the splendid copper-plate writing with which our writing-master at school used to begin each of the pages, sadly contrasted by the weak, irresolute up-strokes and down-strokes of the pupils.

Well, one of these "individuals," the gentleman, was my papa. He is still a very handsome man, who, I am quite sure, remains a widower only because he chooses, for there are hundreds of charming girls who would jump at him. His manly and erect figure would look perfectly imposing in uniform; and, if those dreadful French should come, and papa should have to arm in our defence, I am positive that the instant he comes upon parade he will be chosen Lord Lieutenant, or whatever the highest rank in the militia may be. He is so cheerful, and so good-naturedly sarcastic, that he is quite delightful society for any one who understands him: but I think that most of the young men whom we know are rather afraid of him. As we used to walk along the cliffs, or on the Parade, the wind doing its best to blow us into the heart of Sussex, and papa striding steadily onwards, pulling poor little me with him, and every now and then turning his dear old face full upon

the sea, as much as to ask the wind which of them it thought would be tired first, I used to feel as proud of him as it was possible under the circumstances; namely, my breath being quite taken away, my bonnet turning from side to side like the cowl of a chimney-pot, and my dress doing its best to get back to the comfortable warm wardrobe out of which it had been taken.

The other of the two persons was myself. Now, I am always delighted when, in a novel, I come to the description of the heroine, and read how her glossy hair lay in braids of exquisite smoothness, and how their rich dark purple contrasted with the polished alabaster of her complexion. But I must dispense with all this in my own case, for I have been obliged to introduce myself at a moment when my hair was anything but smooth, or in exquisite braids, and my complexion was just the reverse of either polished or alabaster. For we had been down at Brighton some time, and what with bathing (which makes it quite impossible to keep one's hair nice), and what with boating and fishing, and riding, and general exposure to the weather (for I can't bear those "uglies," which look like models, in blue, of the canvas-enclosures at the end of the bathing-machines)—I say of all the sun-browned, gipsy-looking things you ever

saw, I had become the wildest. Of course all that is over now, and I have regained my drawing-room looks (whatever they may be); but, on the day of which I speak, I should be telling a most dreadful story if I said that Miss Violet Brompton, walking by the side of her papa, looked anything but a pretty girl (I *will* say that) in the best health and the sauciest spirits, and in one of the loveliest morning dresses you ever saw (I *will* say that, too) and I must reluctantly leave all the rest of my personal advantages to be inferred from the sayings and doings of other people. It is not for me to make the observation that the young men of the present day are not blind, and that there are plenty of lovely girls in the world; and, therefore, that if one obtains an unusually large share of attention, there must be something about one distinguishing one from other people.

Papa likes places for such odd reasons. One gentleman likes Brighton, because you come tearing down from town in less time than it takes an omnibus to get from the City to Hampstead. Another, because Brill's bath is the finest plunge he knows. Another (a selfish, greedy creature), because he can get a better dinner at the Bedford than his poor dear wife, who is always ill, can give him at Camberwell. Papa likes Brighton because the

Parade is, he says, a great shelf on which all sorts of types of past days are put away. I don't pretend to understand all his historical allusions, (though I flatter myself I do know rather more history than little Captain Welwyn, who objected to go to Lady L-nd-nd-rry's *bal costumé* as *Edward the Black Prince*, because he did not like a character which, he conceived, required him to blacken his face), but it is amusing to hear papa point out the people who have figured in times gone by. There are old, wicked-looking men, with thin faces, long noses, and quaint hats, who have drunk Regent punch with King George the Fourth at the poor Pavilion, and have seen the King make his coats fit in the wonderful manner they did, by snipping off every wrinkle with a pair of scissors, and having the holes fine drawn. There comes a gentleman in nankeen, with bright brass buttons on his light-blue coat. He toddles along on his ivory-headed bamboo, feebly enough now, but he was another sort of person one evening about fifty-two years ago, when, as he will tell you (winking wonderfully at nothing), he was planted in the first row of the pit on the first night of *Pizarro*, to cheer all the patriotic speeches. He carries a snuff-box which was John Kemble's, with the great tragedian's autograph, under a piece of

glass, in the lid. This officer in the Bath chair, who is always muttering, and who makes his servant wheel him out in the worst weathers, helped Lord Nelson to bombard Boulogne, and hopes, he says, before he goes to Heaven, to hear that the same thing has been done again, only with more success, and that "poor Parker" has been avenged. This is Sir Audrey Blatch, in the great coat, buttoned to the chin. He refused to look at the Koh-i-Noor, at the Great Exhibition, because in 1802 he bid for the Pigot diamond, as agent for a Russian Princess (upon whose hand he had designs), and having gone as high as nine thousand guineas, he was afraid to go higher;—it was knocked down for nine thousand five hundred—the Russian lady threw him over in a huff, and "he has hated the sight of diamonds ever since." But these two very old ladies in the low carriage are much more interesting people. One of them, when a girl, was a sort of maid-of-honour to the Duchess of Kingston when that dreadful person was tried before the House of Lords for having married two husbands, and gave evidence for which Lady Kitty Crocodile, as Foote called her, flew at her with a horsewhip when she got home—she has a scar on her neck, they say, from one of the Duchess's slashes. The other, with a

black wig and shades over her eyes, is her cousin, and still older, and has had love made to her by Mirabeau, and was herself in love with Barrington, the pickpocket—neither connection over respectable. And there is a Swiss lady in mourning, which she has worn for nearly sixty years—she was a *protegée* of Madame Du Barry, and was compelled to witness the poor creature's guillotining, after which she escaped from France in male clothes, and never returned. She lives in one room with a large bay window, and has a wonderful collection of lovely little china boxes, painted with shepherds and shepherdesses, which she likes to show to people, poor old thing! These are some of the folks papa has pointed out to me in our walks, and especially about the time we have been going to Mutton's for our ice—the errand on which the "individuals" were bound, at the time so beautifully described for me at the beginning of this chapter.

That day an odd thing happened; but I can't tell it, properly, in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

As if I cared in the least about the creature! or had given him the least tinny-tiny bit of encouragement in the whole world! And yet papa has been going on at me, in his quiet teasing manner, for I don't know how long. Just as if it was my fault! or as if there was any fault at all anywhere, except that stupid Mr. Mutton's, for not having his shop made twenty times as large as it is, so that people could eat their ices without other people brushing so closely by them, in passing, as to knock the spoon out of their hands, and so give more people an excuse for getting other spoons and presenting them. Not that I see much harm in that, but papa is so aggravating when he likes. I believe he could talk round and round a Bijou Almanac until it seemed a Post Office Directory. And then he's so good-natured all the time, that—But I promised to tell all about it.

I suppose everybody in the world knows Mutton's at Brighton. Papa calculates that on an average, during the season, 2000 jokes are made, every week, on the unfortunate man's name. Every new comer, of course, considers it his duty to be smart on poor Mr. Mutton, and wonders that people who have been down at Brighton for three days don't laugh. Even papa himself made a joke about him, but it was in Latin, and addressed to two fast Oxford men, who, of course, did not understand it. But Dr. Cloisters, Dean of St. Mildew's (who knows that papa is intimate with several bishops), applauded it so heartily, that I made him write it down for me. Some young officers, it seems, had been running in debt with Mr. Mutton, who could never get any money from them. But as two of them came into the shop one day, papa, quoting the Fourth Satire of Horace, ("v. 12," the Dean has written, but I don't know what that means), described them as people,

"Longa quibus facies Ovis erit;"

which I understand meant people to whom Mr. Mutton would pull a long face.

Well Mutton's was very full, and we were all taking our lunch in that comfortable state of squeeze common at supper-time in third-rate

squares, where folks who can't afford to give many parties, ask three times as many people as the poor little house will hold. One don't mind it at supper, however, because sometimes good comes out of it, and at any rate it would be ill-natured to complain; but in a hot shop, in the middle of the day, it is very disagreeable. Papa and I were separated, and I was standing, and making haste with my strawberry ice (spoiling my gloves, indeed), in order to get away, when that Mrs. Major Kilpiggin, of somewhere in Ireland, came pushing past me with a great plate of smoking soup held tight in both hands (*her* gloves were safe enough, for, if she has any, she never brings them out), and knocked my spoon out of my fingers, sending a dab of strawberry ice into the red-hot face of General Bangle, who was sitting near me—and serve him right, for his Anglo-Indian selfishness in not giving me his seat. I expected to hear the ice hiss on his fiery cheek. Mrs. Kilpiggin held on her way; but looked round with her good-natured Irish grimace (there's no being angry with that merry vulgar face), and cried out,

"Ye'll hold the silver toigter, darlin', when ye're my age."

(And tight enough she holds it, if all is true

that people say about her; and that plate of soup was her dinner for the day; but, then, Major Kilpiggin will play at billiards with everybody, and everybody will beat him, and half-pay won't go far with billiards and seven children, poor creatures.) But she never even begged my pardon.

In a moment I was conscious of a very strong odour of tobacco, and a rather tall man leaned over some others, took a plate, on which was another spoon about to be handed to somebody else, and offered it to me, with a sort of grave bow. I took it, of course, and then I thought I would look at the civil person who had given it to me. He was certainly handsome, but looked as haggard and dispirited as if he had been up about a hundred nights, and had not been exactly drinking water all the time. His dress was careless, rather than slovenly, but altogether he had the look and manner of a gentleman. And that is all I should have ever thought about the matter; but as I looked at him he actually coloured. Now, gentlemen do not often do this; but when such an accident does happen, they always seem heartily ashamed of themselves. But this person, although his face flushed all over, appeared quite unconcerned about it, and, indeed, about everything else, except my poor little face, at which he con-

tinued to look, not exactly staring, but with a fixed gaze, like that mentioned in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's* novels, when the heroine meets somebody who is her "Destiny." Perhaps I stood his look the hundredth part of a moment longer than was quite proper, but his face interested me, and I was thankful for the spoon. And then I looked at my ice, and the next moment rude old General Bangle got up and stretched himself along the counter to get another great sticky Bath-bun. In an instant his chair was taken from behind him by my haggard-looking friend, and placed for me, and the general, never dreaming of what had happened, would have gone down on the floor, but for the other saying, in a careless kind of way,

"Thank you; I'm sure you're very polite."

I do not think such a charge had ever been brought against General Bangle in all his life; and turning round, with natural indignation, to meet his accuser, he saw his chair gone, and the stranger motioning to me to take it. I would have slipped away, but the crowd prevented me, and there was nothing between standing by a chair, looking awkward, and taking it. So I did the latter, but with such a pretty smile of thanks to the old general,

* Mr. Disraeli.

that if he had not been a dreadful old Bengal royal tiger, he would have been delighted, instead of enraged. As it was, however, I am ashamed to say that he not only muttered the word "impertinent," so loud that everybody around could hear, but actually put another word before it, which papa calls "the theological equivalent for *very*."

Everybody looked round, and I was in terror that I was going to be made the centre of a scene. But my new friend had not the slightest intention that I should be placed in a false position; for turning completely from me, and, in fact, interposing between me and the angry General, he said, quite loud and cordially,

"Ah, General Bangle! I beg your pardon, I did not recognise you."

"Sir," said the General (I could not see his face, but his voice was very furious), "I don't know you, but I know——"

"My friend Wobby Wattle; you were going to say you knew him? Yes, I had the pleasure of seeing him at his rooms the day you called" (this was said very distinctly) "to pay the fifty pounds you lost to him at *écarté* on Sunday week. He's very well, and eager to give the revenge you promised to take."

I could not, as I have said, see the General: but

what I could see was the face of his wife, who had been sitting near him. Fiery as the General is, Mrs. General Bangle is his implacable superior officer. Terrible as he is to the world, to him she is far more terrible. She is a rigid theologian (Clapham patent), and a still more rigid financialist. And here was her husband convicted at once of gambling and of losing, and of doing both on a Sunday. As I glanced at her face, which was at a white heat, I thought how much better it would have been for the General, if he had offered me the chair originally, like an officer and a gentleman.

"General Bangle lose fifty pounds at cards!" she almost screamed. "You can't know what you are talking about, young man." And her eyes quite flashed.

"Having had the honour of being witness to the payment," replied the other with great politeness, "I can testify to the alacrity of the General in discharging his play obligations. I gave Wobby cash for the cheque, to save him the trouble of going to —to Ransom's—I think that is your banker's, General?"

"You *were* in town on Sunday week, Bangle," said the lady, in a low deadly voice, "and you told me the name of the chapel you went to three times

that day, and the heads of the three discourses. We had better go home. Bring the Bath bun with you, as, having been broken, it must be paid for, I conclude." And the General was taken away to undergo the *peine forte et dure*, it is supposed, and he has not been heard of since.

Papa, as the little scene ended, was standing near me, greatly amused. I told him in two words how it had arisen. I saw he was looking very curiously at the gentleman who had caused it, and who, I felt, had resumed his original occupation of admiring Miss Brompton.

"Mr. Albany——— Something?" said papa, in his good-natured manner, "Were you not dining at the Parthian Club about a month since with Mr. Nimrod McBlazes, the great mammoth slayer?" I think papa knows everybody.

"Albany Swellington," said the gentleman, looking immensely delighted, and expecting, I do believe, that he was going to be presented to me.

"Ah!" said papa, "how tough that saddle of mutton was, that day! Come, Violet, my dear, let us have a blow on the pier."

I could not help giving poor Albany one look as we went out, but papa need not have noticed it.

CHAPTER V.

ALBANY—I mean Mr. Swellington—has managed it at last, and papa has introduced us. But, oh, how hard the poor young man did try before he succeeded! Suddenly, and I suppose for the first time in his life, he began to pay attention to his dress; and really made himself look exceedingly well. Wherever we went, papa and I, he contrived to meet us accidentally. But it was all of no use. Papa used to give him a good-natured nod, but never would enter into conversation; and poor Albany was obliged to go away, day by day, looking perfectly miserable, and wishing, most earnestly, I have no doubt, that the sea would rise and wash away Brighton, or that the French would land an army at the end of the pier, or some other little excuse arise for his speaking to Violet Brompton.

"Miss Violet," said papa, all of a sudden, as we were cantering home from the Dyke one after-

noon, "you must come to town with me to-morrow to a christening party."

"Why, papa, what people do we know that have been having a baby?" I asked.

"The Directors of the Circumnavigating Amalgamated Paddle-box Steamboat Company," replied papa; "and their baby, which is rather a fine one, being two hundred feet long, is to undergo the ceremony of immersion at Blackwall to-morrow, at high tide."

"O, a launch, papa! That will be delightful. Only—"

"The bonnet you had on this morning, will, on the contrary, do exceedingly well, Miss Violet Brompton," said papa, demurely, "and so will the dress."

Next day we were at Blackwall in very good time. We were most politely received in a sort of great dark workshop, and were conducted into an enormous yard, beyond which I could see the river. The yard was studded with rows of immense posts, and between them, like some huge black giant fish, was the vessel, with the wrong end towards us. It gave one a great notion of vastness; but I had no time to think about it, for three or four gentlemen, recognising papa, came up. As soon as I was introduced, one of them—

it was Mr. Weevil (he is a dreadfully rich biscuit-exporter, but owns I don't know how many Members of Parliament, and all sorts of things) —said,

"There's your bottle, Miss Brompton. Don't be nervous about smashing it."

I must have stared quite stupidly. Papa says that I can open my eyes wider than any lady of his acquaintance, except one of the great owls at Arundel. "I am to smash a bottle?" I repeated.

"There it hangs," said Mr. Weevil, pointing. And surely enough there was, suspended by a cord from the bow of the vessel, a black wine bottle. It hung half-way down, and a sort of scaffold or platform, covered with red chintz, rose to meet it.

"The name is to be *Chimborazo*, if you please," said another gentleman. "I will write it down, lest at the critical moment it should escape you. I remember on a similar occasion a young Scottish lady's nervousness slightly confused her memory, and a beautiful ship for the Mediterranean service, which it was intended to call the *Lacedæmon*, went into the water as the *Demon Lassie*."

"But you never mean that I am to christen the vessel?" I said, quite in a flurry, as the idea broke upon my mind.

"Your papa was kind enough to write us word

that the *Chimborazo* would have that good fortune," said the gentleman who had last spoken.

"And you never told me that, papa."

"Or you would have rehearsed the part, my love, I suppose. Never mind. We shall manage quite well."

A very intelligent-looking workman here came up, and touching his cap, said something about the tide.

"Very well," said the gentleman who had told me the news, and who I found was Mr. Kelson, the builder of the ship, "everybody to his post. Will Miss Brompton take hers?"

Papa gave me his arm, and I mounted the scaffold with remarkable composure (what a terrible sentence if anybody should light upon it without seeing what it means!) and on the little platform I found several ladies, friends of the Directors. Mr. Kelson introduced me to a few of them, and showed me how I was to draw back the bottle, and let it break upon the bow of the great steamer. And then he, and papa, and all the gentlemen went down, and scrambled upon projections which stuck out into the river, or upon planks stretched along from post to post at a dizzy height, where they could command a better view of the vessel. We, I mean the ladies, all began

to talk and laugh; those who had seen such sights before told as much as they could tell, in a dreadful hurry; those who had not, inquired which way the ship would go, and whether she was likely to fall over and crush us, and why the sails were not all put in and spread out, which we agreed would have made the sight much prettier. And all our little flurry and excitement and chatter went on, and a great number of men were busily at work below us, greasing the wood along which the ship was to slide, when it suddenly occurred to me to pronounce the name I was going to call the vessel. Good gracious me! It had gone quite out of my head. Mr. Kelson had forgotten so write it down, and I was worse off than the poor young lady he mentioned, for I could not think of anything like it. It was some mountain, that I was sure. I hastily called up before me all the mountains I knew (just as they stand in the picture of Comparative Heights in our School Atlas), but I could not hit upon the right one. Himalaya sprang up behind Mont Blanc, and Snowdon before Vesuvius, and the Pyrenees and Alps and Andes literally danced round me. O, I was so ashamed of myself!

"Pray," I said, pitifully, "does any lady know the name of the vessel?"

Nobody knew—nobody had heard—one little girl, however, suggesting that her brother had a boat at Broadstairs, last holidays, called the *Jumping Jimmy*, and begging I would call this ship so, because that would be fun.

How I looked round for assistance! But papa and everybody had gone, and I could see their figures against the sky, at a distance which at that moment seemed a thousand miles at least.

"What ever *shall* I do!" I said; and as I spoke, I happened to look up, and very near us, but perched high up on a ledge where nobody but a wild person would have thought of climbing, I saw a gentleman who had clearly got there only that he might watch us. A glance told me who it was. There clung the eternal Albany Swellington.

The other ladies discovering him, there was a general cry to him. But he kept his eyes steadily on me.

"Anything wrong?" he shouted. "Can I be of any service?" And though he was at least ten yards from the ground he looked as if I had only to say "Jump," and down he would have gone.

"The name, the name?" cried a dozen voices.

"*Chimborazo*," he instantly replied, very distinctly. "Think of arms akimbo and razors." And in spite of his dangerous position, the earnest

creature illustrated his mnemonics by putting his arms to his sides, and then by pretending to shave. I could hardly help laughing, but I am certain that he saw nothing to laugh at; and was only zealous that I should remember the name. I gave him a grateful look—at least he says so—and then a pistol went off, and all the ladies called upon me to make haste. For there was the monster ship, which was to fight the storms half round the world, ready to make her first plunge into the water, and only waiting one word from the lips of a little girl.

I had prompters enough then, but I did not want them—the word was said—the bottle fell in pieces from the side of the ship, with a great splash of wine, and the next minute the immense mountain was sliding away from before us, like a moving panorama, disclosing a new scene of masts and posts, and workmen, and houses, and flags, all standing out against the bright blue sky. Such cheering and shouting, as the ship, making one plunge, shot out into the water, and then glided along majestically, keeping her position as exactly as if, instead of her being a mass of timbers and planks fastened together, nature had made her a floating creature. But papa told me afterwards that in all private dockyards ships are built on

sound mathematical principles, and that it is only those built at the expense of the nation that tumble over and sail backwards, and are altogether blunders.

When papa rejoined us, I could not help telling him what a fright I had been in, and of Albany's kind assistance. He listened very quietly; but when he heard of the pantomime with which the information had been accompanied, he laughed very heartily, and declared there was "something *in* that young fellow." And no sooner did he see Mr. Swellington looking for a place at the beautiful *déjeûner* Mr. Kelson gave us all at Lovegrove's Hotel, to celebrate the launch, than he pointed to a chair next to me. Albany's grateful dart at it was beautiful to behold; and so was his pleasure, when papa, introducing him to me, thanked him for having prompted a young lady who had forgotten her geography.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE christening breakfast is a pretty good one, eh! Miss Violet?" said papa. "Give me four of those amiable prawns, and tell me whether you approve of the Amalgamated Paddle-boxes?"

I confessed I thought the scene quite delightful. It was a beautiful afternoon; the water was very high, and at Blackwall you get two such large, broad views of the river, that with the help of a little imagination (and, as papa very wickedly remarked, a little champagne), you may believe yourself to be far away from dear old poky, choky, smoky London. And then our *déjeûner* was so nicely managed. A long table, covered with glass, silver, and flowers, interspersed only with dishes, which, as the genteel cookery-books say, "look elegant,"—jellies spangled with gold leaf, ivory blanc-mange gemmed with strawberries like rubies, fairy temples of amber sugar, vases of preserved fruits of delicious colours—all made such

a pretty picture that I was quite vexed with the greedy creatures who broke it up without the least ceremony.

Our party was a large one. The chairman of the company, Sir Cowry Pice—the dearest old man you ever saw; tall, and white-haired, but still very handsome; and his nice old kind voice just beginning to weaken, but not the least cracked—he was at the head. Right and left of him were the ladies, between the gentlemen who brought them. But the ladies were too few for the civilisation of any great length of the table, and two long lines of black-coated creatures made a perspective, at the end of which was a gentleman who was incessantly shouting to everybody to take wine with him. He was also a Director of the Amalgamated, and he amalgamated his own directions shockingly towards the end of the lunch, and no wonder, considering how many times his glass had been filled.

The pretty things on the table were sadly pushed about to make room for turtle-soup, and white-bait, and *cotelettes à la financière*, and other matters, which made, as an Irish gentleman opposite poetically observed, "not a bad imitation of a cowld collation." And the champagne corks popped in every direction; and as for the waiters,

they flew about with the bottles, as if what Albany said were true; namely, that any waiter would be discharged who saw an empty glass and did not instantly fill it. As for papa, he was enjoying himself greatly in his quiet way, and I was quite delighted to see what attention all the leading gentlemen paid him, telling him little bits of confidential news which seemed to relate to very important subjects, and waiting for his answers with evident respect. One of the guests was a Member of Parliament, I found. He was dreadfully ugly, with yellow hair, and all his forehead puckered in wrinkles, occasioned, papa said, by his sitting up all night to learn tremendously long sums by heart, that in the House he might spatter out the figures against all his enemies. Near him was a young barrister with a white cravat and diamond studs, and he worried the clever arithmetical member sadly by trying to be smart at the end of each of the other's remarks.

"You set the Speaker a little Rule-of-Three work last night, Mr. Phraction, I see," said papa.

"Ah! yes," said Mr. Phraction, with a look and tone of great vexation, "but the papers have utterly spoiled the speech, utterly vitiated my argument. Don't read it."

"I won't," said papa; "rely upon my friendship to that extent, and upon any similar occasion. But what have they made you say—indeed, what was the question? I hardly looked."

"Why, Sir Barnacle Maul had moved, and very properly, that every bishop appointed to a see in Wales should be able to speak Welsh. Thereupon Mummery Nimbus, the Puseyite, moved as an amendment, that every colonial bishop should be blacked all over, or tatooed, according to the state of the flock he was sent to. I supported Maul; but you will not comprehend my reasons, for instead of 18493724, the figures I used, they have printed 19531876. It's very provoking."

"But what on earth," said papa, "have those awful figures to do with a clerical question?"

"Every question is a question of figures," said Mr. Phraction, gloomily, "especially clerical ones."

"But not of lay figures," snapped in the smart young barrister. "And if I were the Speaker, I would stop your arithmetic in the language of the Matilda press novels, and say 'Figure to yourself——'"

Mr. Phraction waited very quietly until the smart gentleman had let off his two little jokes, and then he said:

"My numbers were the number of Welsh people who would very likely have gone to church, if their bishops had spoken Welsh since the 1st of March, 1800."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Albany, who for the first moment had turned his attention to anybody but his neighbour. "I beg your pardon, but I mean that I don't understand how you calculate such a matter."

Papa looked up at Mr. Albany, as much as to say, "Now, you *have* caught it!"

"Thus," said Mr. Phraction. "Take the number of churches and what they will hold, and the registers of marriages and baptisms, and multiply these by the assessed taxes, subtracting the paupers in workhouses, who have chapels therein, and subtracting also the prisoners in jails, who probably are not regular attendants at church; add the godfathers and godmothers to the bridesmen and bridesmaids, deducting three per cent. for bridesmaids under the age of fourteen, and two per cent. for Dissenting ones who will not go to church, but only eat the breakfast,—dividing, also, the freeholders by the copyholders, and multiplying the tenants-at-will who vote for church candidates——"

"By the tenants-at-won't, who go in for the

schism-shop"—dashed in the smart barrister; and so poor Albany was saved, Mr. Phraction, who was put out, promising to write it all down for him. Proud of his victory, the barrister turned to a French lady who, with her husband, had been invited to see the launch.

"*Madam ne parle par note langue?*" he asked, with a patronising smile.

Madame looked at her husband, who brought up his lingual forces with the utmost alacrity.

"Ah!" he said, laughing good-naturedly, "not too much well. Not still. At the good time. She commence."

"*C'est difficile,*" said Madame, smiling.

"*Say vray, say vray,*" graciously returned the Englishman; "*say tro vray. May,*" he continued, wishing to be *spirituel*, "*le tong fay mirark, Regardez-mwaw, je le parle tray faceel-mong mwaw.*"

"But Monsieur is an English person?" asked the gentleman, not apprehending the joke.

"*Say vray,*" again replied the barrister. "*Set oon petee calembug de mwaw, say too.*"

"Ah!" said the Frenchman; and courteously commenced laughing heartily, in a high key, as soon as he understood that the other had intended to amuse him. And the latter, with great earnest-

ness, remarked to us how the acquisition of a foreign language humanised society, and promoted universal brotherhood.

As for Albany, he was so happy, that he agreed with everybody, but certainly without listening to anybody but me, with a slight exception in favour of papa. Mr. Phraction's wonderful problem diverted him for a moment; I suppose, because, having been accustomed (as he admitted) to think of "the odds," which is some kind of equestrian arithmetic—calculations were easy to him. Indeed, papa congratulated him on this, and told him to mind his "book," as, if he got into Parliament it might recommend him to the favour of a horse-racing Ministry. But Albany declared that he had given all such things up, and was reading very hard for the bar. I cannot say that he talked well; indeed he was far too happy to care much what he said, but he seemed to know something on most subjects. Only his ideas came out as if he had not been in the habit of drawing upon them—as if he had associated with people on whom they would have been wasted. I think he was a little surprised at finding that I did not talk, perhaps, quite such nonsense as some men think all girls talk. But it is too early to tell what he thought about me.

When everybody had finished lunch, Sir Cowry Pice stood up, and suddenly six gentlemen, a little below us, pulled out six pencils, and next day all the world knew exactly what the dear old man had said. He proposed that we should all wish good fortune to the great ship we had seen launched, and which was just then, we could see, being towed into the dock, to be finished. And looking very kindly at me, he added something which I should actually be ashamed to write down, only that the six gentlemen were good enough to rap their pencils on the table, and then to take down Sir Cowry's exact words. He said that, let the good ship *Chimborazo* touch at a thousand shores, as he heartily hoped she might do, for the sake of the dividend (here all the gentlemen applauded), as well as for her own, she would never find a more charming person than the young lady who had that day done her the honour of giving her a name.

The company applauded, papa nodded, as much as to say—"Yes, she's not so disagreeable," and, as for Albany, I believe he was meditating a leap upon his chair for the purpose of leading off the Kentish fire, or some such tremendous demonstration; but I happened, providentially, to give him an appealing look, which

so bewildered him that his purpose failed him, and he contented himself with giving, in a most intense whisper, his zealous assurance to me, that Sir Cowry Pice had not said half enough in my praise.

CHAPTER VII.

I HOPE I have done right. But papa had gone up from Brighton to town, and I had no one to consult. It came upon me so unexpectedly, too, and had to be disposed of directly. Right or wrong,—but I am sure I was right—the question is settled, and so is the Reverend Ichabod Blare.

We used to see a good deal of him when we lived at Hampstead, I was going to say because he had a chapel somewhere in Camden Town, but it might be more correct to say, because papa was very hospitable. Before he retired from business, he used regularly to walk home from the City; and it was quite astonishing how often the Reverend Mr. Blare happened to cross his road just in time to catch him. Sometimes the Reverend Ichabod would pop out near Mother Red Cap's, ramming some tracts into his pocket as soon as he was sure papa had seen them; sometimes he would be descending Haverstock Hill, reading a little book,

and would nearly run over papa, before pretending to recognise him. Then he would look up with a very sweet smile, and say with a sort of sigh,

"Ah, my friend! So the toil of the day is over, and the labourer returns to his rest? Well—well—well." And with each of the last three words he would pat papa gently on the arm, as if compassionating his need of rest, and not judging him too austerely for going home to dinner.

Papa understood it all perfectly well, and when the dinner-bell rang, and I managed to meet him and kiss him as he came out of his dressing-room, he used to tell me, in a low droll voice, the form of encouragement he had that day received from his reverend friend. But he was so good-natured that he generally let Mr. Ichabod accomplish his object, and only baffled him when we had clergymen of a much nicer kind coming to dinner. And sometimes, too, papa would make little mischievous reprisals. One day, the Reverend Ichabod darted out of ambush, in Flask Walk, and pounced upon papa and me.

"Ah! Mr. Blare, if we had only met yesterday! The Bishop of St. Croziers, my old schoolfellow, was in town about some livings he has to fill up, and came up to take his chop with me. You would have liked to meet him."

The Reverend Mr. Blare knew that very well, and his fat face looked uglier than ever as he pretended to smile away his annoyance, and answered, meekly,

"These things are not in our own disposal, my friend. Yet I was walking about on the hill, as it chanced, for upwards of an hour, about your usual time."

"We came home Regent's Park way," papa replied, "to take up a young clergyman in Albany Street whom I wanted to introduce to the Bishop."

"A dangerous neighbourhood," Mr. Blare said, indemnifying himself for his vexation with a little bit of spite. "Dangerously near Puseyite ground" (for the Reverend Ichabod is so furiously Clapham-ite, that his conscience forbade him to go to the May Meetings, because Exeter Hall bore the name of Dr. Philpott's diocese). "I trust your friend meddles not with such leaven. There is only one way in which such persons should be brought under the notice of a bishop."

"I trust I have not done anything wrong," papa answered, humbly. "I think not, because his Lordship seemed pleased with my young friend, and made an appointment for him to meet the Examining Chaplain."

But it was not often that papa would amuse

himself in this way, and generally when Mr. Ichabod had patted his arm, and encouraged the labourer to go to his rest, would say,

"The labourer has got some Severn salmon to-day" (or some lamperns from Tewkesbury, or some teal, or whatever it might be); "come on to his hut, if you have nothing better to do."

And you may take my word for it that the Reverend Ichabod Blare never had anything better to do, or if he had, he never did it.

I said he was an ugly young man, but it was not a common kind of ugliness. His forehead retreated, and his nose, which was a very ignoble sort of pyramidical nose, projected very far, and so did his lips; and his great fat double chin had not the least little atom of whiskers; and he invariably wore a white cravat, very tight, so that he always looked hot; and being stout, and wearing a dress coat, and everything else of black (except his Berlin gloves), he resembled an undertaker rejoicing in a good business. But papa has brought home much more hideous men, who have gone away leaving me perfectly in love with them. There was a coarseness of expression about the Reverend Mr. Ichabod's face, which, I suppose, made it so disagreeable. He was a pushing, prosperous person, and his flocks used to make a great deal of him,

and present him with silver services, and new gowns, and portraits of himself; but he deserted them without the least compunction, the moment anything better offered.

Mr. Blare had been staying at Brighton, and had called several times, but, until the morning I speak of, we had been out. I was near the window, feeding my canary birds, and wondering whether dear Mr. Kidd ever went out as private tutor to teach the darling things the feats he describes so delightfully, as, if so, I said I would make papa engage him for mine. Mr. Blare came to the door, and saw me as he rang, and he quite walked over the servant, rebuking the poor girl for falsehood in trying to say "not at home," I was fairly caught, for I had let my birds out, and I was afraid to leave them, or I should have run away.

"Ah, Miss Violet!" he said, marching into the room, his thick boots creaking dreadfully. And stalking up to me, he frightened my poor birds so, that they flew round and round the room, until one fell down in the dust behind the looking-glass, and the other dashed out into the hall, and half-stunned itself against the window. I was *so* angry!

"Here," he said, sitting himself down quite

composedly (I wished the light chair had crunched under him), "here, my dear young lady, you behold an illustration of our depraved nature."

I looked at him, and felt quite inclined to agree with him. For I always disliked him, as I am afraid what I have said will have discovered. But while my poor bird was scratching, and fluttering, and chirping in dismay behind the glass, I almost hated the Reverend Ichabod.

"Thus," he continued, "we all act, like those silly and foolish birds."

"They are neither silly nor foolish, Mr. Blare," I said (I fear, quite rudely), "but they know their friends, and dislike strangers." And I tried to coax poor little Jujube from his cranny; and the little thing, knowing my voice, was endeavouring to extricate himself, when Mr. Blare, who had been looking at me impatiently, snatched up his great thick cotton umbrella, and actually thrust it in between the wall and the glass, to "poke the bird towards me," as he said. I was so astonished at anybody thinking of such a thing, that I could hardly cry out, and Mr. Blare, with a sort of grin, would certainly have killed poor Jujube, or hurt him dreadfully, when, I am delighted to say, the force of the great thick umbrella was too much for the fastenings which held the glass, and down

came the glass itself upon the fender, with a smash that sent it into a thousand pieces. Poor Jujube flew to his cage, and, dusty as he was, began to chirrup out his gratitude at being delivered; while there stood the Reverend Ichabod Blare, with his umbrella in his hand, and his mouth open. I could not help laughing, startled as I was, to see his dismay.

"A bad omen, Mr. Blare," I said, "to break a looking-glass! Ill luck for seven years to come—least, so my old nurse taught me."

But he would not laugh, and gave such a savage look at poor Jujube, who was cleaning his wings, and chirping in exultation, that I was quite glad I was there to protect the poor little creature. It was clear that the horrid man thought he should have to pay the lodging-keeper for the glass; as if papa would have heard of such a thing.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE crash of the looking-glass of course brought the servants into the room; and, by the time the pieces were swept up, and I had put Jujube and the other bird into the cage, and the scene was over, the Reverend Mr. Blare had recovered his usual sleek tranquillity. He was good enough to tell me not to be discomposed about these little worldly trials, which, however, vexatious they might appear, were nothing to what missionaries and their converts in the interior of Africa were undergoing every day. And to bring my mind into a proper state for what was to follow, he pulled out a Report of the Clapham Rise Auxiliary Junction Branch of the British and Abyssinian Anti-Pelagian School Society, and read a most affecting letter from one Brother Clammy, an Abyssinian correspondent, who stated that he had recently been privileged to yoke himself together in marriage with Sister Vashti Gubbins, also an agent of

the Society. But the sister had found favour in the eyes of King Quoppo Bungo, the chief of a tribe to whom she and the brother had paid a visit; and his Majesty had not only been graciously pleased to insist on being present at the wedding, but in the exuberance of his good-humour, had ordered one of the bridesmaids (a native convert) to be cooked for his supper and that of the happy pair.

Replacing the Clapham Rise Report in his pocket, Mr. Blare looked at me with a most elaborate smile of exceeding duration, and then, in an oily voice, asked me whether I thought I should have the courage to become, like the dear sister of whom he had read to me, a labourer in the vineyard of duty. I had managed to recover my amiability (which, indeed, I felt ashamed of myself for having lost, for Mr. Blare had frightened my birds by mere accident, and could not have meant to annoy me), and so I answered, laughingly, that I was afaid I should make a poor labourer in any cause, but I thought that what duty I ought to do must lie a little nearer than Abyssinia. But I supposed Sister Gubbins had been a lady without any relations or friends to whom she could be of service, and that the neighbourhood in which she had lived, when at home,

had stood in no need of assistance. If that were so, I could admire the philanthropy which had led her to a distant part of the world.

The Reverend Ichabod Blare shook his head, and said pityingly—"An old, common-place argument, unworthy of you, my dear Miss Brompton. It has been urged and answered thousands of times."

"I—I assure you," I said (ashamed that I should have been so ignorant), "that I did not think of an argument. I only said what came into my mind."

"Utterly unworthy," he continued, as if the words were the regular form (and I suspect they are) in which to meet the objection. "Look into the *Times*, and you will see that subscriptions of hundreds of thousands of pounds, for doing good in the Antipodes, attest how little value seriously-minded people attach to your conditions."

"I am sure," I replied, "that I ought not to contest such a matter, or any other matter, indeed; for I am sadly ignorant. But papa was lately reading to me, from the same *Times*, that, in London only, one person out of every twenty who rise in the morning, has no means of food or shelter for the day and coming night, except what may be afforded by accident or crime. And I

think he said, that as there were about two millions of people in London, this would make about one hundred thousand driven every day to beg, or to do wrong, in order to keep life in them, poor creatures. Perhaps—but, mind, I am not arguing —some of these thousands of pounds that go to the Antipodes might do more good if they were spent in helping our own unfortunate neighbours."

I quite coloured at having made so long a speech to a clergyman.

"So much for poor human instinct, poor human reason," he said, smiling. "Let us who know better, be thankful."

I saw no objection to this arrangement, and, as just then Emma came in to say that lunch was ready, I thought I would imitate papa, in a small way.

"Do you like sardines, Mr. Blare?" I asked. "Papa has brought down some which he declares are gold fish. Will you come and try them?"

The Reverend Mr. Blare immediately offered me his arm, for which I saw no particular occasion, and we went into the other room, where, though he modestly declared he was very partial to the sardines, he showed becoming impartiality by also

feasting very heartily upon everything else, not forgetting papa's pale sherry, of which he nearly finished a bottle. I took up some crochet, not to seem to hurry him, but every time I looked up, I observed that Mr. Blare was staring at me in an extraordinary manner.

"You are knitting," he suddenly said, after a long silence.

I was doing nothing of the kind, but men are dreadfully stupid about such matters, and confound all our work most absurdly. And yet they think us such frivolous ill-informed things, if we ask whether prisoners are ever tried in the Court of Chancery, or whether handicaps are some kind of jockey's costume, or why a second reading of a bill in Parliament should be made more fuss about than a first.

"Not exactly knitting," I said, "but——"

"Yes, you are," he said, quite peremptorily; "a knitting which, perhaps, you reck not of, but which is good abiding work, nevertheless.

I thought that he had been taking in the *Family Herald;* and was going to retail to me one of the capital American stories papa is so fond of. So I looked up, prepared to laugh as soon as he should explain the riddle.

"A knitting of hearts," he said, solemnly, "to

be unravelled only when this valley shall have been traversed."

I do not know how I looked then, or indeed during the rest of the interview; but the Reverend Ichabod probably did, for he got up rather hastily, came round to me, drew a chair very near me, and, sitting down, rested himself slopingly on the table, so as to command a good view of my face.

"Miss Brompton," he said, "I came here this day for a purpose which (Providence willing) I will now carry out. What I have to say may surprise you, but I have observed that you have received the gift of humility and self-abasement, and I do not fear that you will be puffed up. First, I would tell you of a providential occurrence which has happened to myself. I have been guided to purchase a chapel at the west end of the town, and I have bought it cheaply, for the seller was in straitened circumstances, and clutched at my ready money, though I offered him far less than his worldly cunning induced him to ask. With a small outlay, and due exertions on my part, I trust to find in this speculation not only a good investment, but the means of an ample income. There is no place near my purchase where the inhabitants of the locality can hear what I shall be privileged to tell them. The parish church is

very much obliged to you indeed, for your good opinion of me; but—but nothing could ever induce me to—to—to—be a Vashti Clammy."

At least, I believe I said something of this kind; and the next moment I darted out of the room.

I am certain he did not misunderstand me: for he remained some little time in the parlour, very sensibly drinking all the wine that was left. I say very sensibly, for the last glass of wine the Reverend Ichabod Blare ever had under papa's roof, was that with which he consoled himself for the unfavourable result of Miss Violet's First "Offer."

CHAPTER IX.

I WONDER why it is considered proper to make some apology for being at Epsom on the Derby day. Nobody ever seems inclined to admit that the attractions of a lively day, and a fine sight are satisfactory reasons for going down, and it appears as necessary to have a correct excuse for seeing the races as a correct card of the horses that run in them. I was quite amused with the various justifications which I heard offered by all sorts of people the last time we went down, which was last year. I do not think papa cared about providing himself with an excuse, but if we had wanted one, we might have said, *selon les règles*, that Aunt Hester had come up from Wales with her two daughters; her husband, Mr. De Stringas, who is a country lawyer, having been obliged to stay in London to answer some election-petition accusations. I think he was charged with having returned his man by bribing the chambermaid of the hotel,

where twenty of the opposite voters were imprisoned, to fill all the jugs in the bed-rooms with whiskey instead of water; and the consequence was, that on the day of poll, every one of the twenty was found in a state of stupefaction, and incapable of even muttering the name of the gentleman they ought to have supported. I think, too, Uncle De Stringas was suspected of having got up a panic, which caused a run upon the country bank where the enemy's funds had been deposited; so that the bankers were obliged to pay to depositors the money intended for bribing, and two days were lost before any fresh supplies could be sent down from the Pall Mall Club. I know that his talents are very highly esteemed in his county, and Aunt Hester always wears a beautiful emerald and pearl brooch, presented to her by the neighbouring gentlemen in commemoration of Uncle's spirited behaviour, when the Speaker of the House of Commons was reprimanding him for violently tearing all the signatures off the petition against his friend. He is the most good-natured, kind-hearted creature in the world, and I am sure that, on the Downs, you might have heard his laugh from the hill to the Grand Stand.

My cousins, Kate and Louisa, are both pretty girls, on rather a large scale, and perhaps with a

little too much of that swing and saucy manner which grows upon girls who are made a good deal of in small circles. But when they come into the world they are shy, almost to stiffness, until they —what they are pleased to call—"know" a person, and then they say anything and everything that comes into their heads. They are dear girls, both of them, and have as good tempers as their papa, and sometimes laugh nearly as loudly. As for Aunt Hester, she only lives for two things—to make her family happy, and to copy all the riddles she can meet with into the fly-leaves of a great old copy of Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, and on the backs of the painful pictures. When we were visiting her, papa altered the inscription under one of the engravings, and made it read, "Mr. Jno. Jones cruelly whip'd by Bishop Bonner, for refusing to reveal why a kitten in walnut-shells was like the General Post Office."

Our carriage was moored nearly opposite the Grand Stand, in an excellent place (where I dare say we shall be seen while little Harry and Claverhouse are running), and everybody came to speak to us between the races. Albany, you may be sure, was down before we were, and rendered most invaluable service, getting the carriage into the front, suggesting all kinds of clever arrangements

for lunch, keeping vigilant guard over us, and driving away all the sullen-looking people who come to snatch the shawls, parasols, and handkerchiefs, while the owners are watching the running. He even got rid of the gipsies in shorter time than anybody else could, and yet without flying into a rage. Besides, he named the horses to us as they cantered to the starting-place (though I do not believe we, or one person in a thousand, recognised any one of the creatures as they came rushing back), arranged sweepstakes between each race, and told us who had won almost the instant the thing was over. He was in capital spirits, and his straightforward, frank, unaffected manner showed to great advantage, as the drawlers and loungers, and men who pretended to be used up, arrived, one after another. As for my cousins, they both declared that they were hopelessly in love with Albany; and Louisa, in particular, did nothing but call out to him to bring her this, and to tell her that, and to help her to the other thing, the whole afternoon. But though he was scrupulously attentive, I do not think that he gave her much encouragement, and he contrived to be on my side of the carriage quite as much as was necessary. Aunty Hester, I believe, saw exactly how matters were, and once when Louisa was crying

out, "O, Mr. Swellington! you *must* come here this instant and tell me something," she said:

"I think, dear, you might as well let Mr. Swellington alone."

And then she looked straight at me for a moment, with a very quiet little smile, and the next moment pretended to be very deep in the advertisements on the back of Mr. Dorling's card. I knew that she had too much good sense to say anything, but I was in perpetual fear lest one of my riotous cousins should shout out what in the country they call "hints," but which sound like most awkwardly plain-speaking in London.

"Here, Violet, here comes another of your *beaux*," (I could never cure the country girls of that word), cried Kate, giving me a push, as little Sir Fingal Mervyn, of the Grenadier Guards, came up, looking dreadfully hot, but greatly pleased with himself for something he had achieved.

"How de doo?" he asked; "delightful day! yes—I can't raise my hat, I'm sorry to say, because it's full of Napoleons, and pincushions, and money-boxes, which would come raining over my shoulders. Great knocking down! tremendous!—Thank you very much; it looks as if it had been invented expressly to meet my emergency." This latter acknowledgment referred to a green glass of

Hock, with a piece of Wenham Lake ice in it, which papa handed down, compassionately, to Sir Fingal.

"You are the real original good Samaritan, Mr. Brompton," said the British Grenadier, as he gave the glass to the servant; "and I won't be ungrateful, because ingratitude is unbeseeming and unbecoming." And he stooped very low to take off his hat without dropping its contents. "There, Miss Brompton, do me the favour to accept a lemon—I knocked him over with my first stick, winning a sovereign thereby from Athanasius Bleat, the barrister, who may be a very good barrister, but shies precious bad. Permit me to offer your friends the following trifles from Epsom; namely, one jack-in-the-box, one——

"Sir Fingal Mervyn, aunt," I said, for I saw the girls were eager to secure some of the Grenadier's spoils.

"Just so," said Sir Fingal, addressing her in the most good-humoured but grave way; "and pray, let me present to you this exemplary bodkin-case—substantial, rather than showy, perhaps. To you (this was to Kate) this distinguished-looking pincushion—observe the red and gold—and to you (this to Louisa) this unparalleled money-box: notice the real brass around the hole.

And now I must go and give the rest to the Baroness Fontarabia, because she is going to take me to town. And so, good-bye, with the same apology as before for not taking off my hat. How are you, Albany? Want to do anything?"

"I never bet, now," said Mr. Swellington, very composedly. "But you are all wrong, as you'll find in a few minutes, for there goes the bell to clear the course."

"Put us up, there's a good one, if you've heard anything," said the Grenadier, very earnestly. "You always——"

Albany hastily whispered something, which sent the officer away with a hasty step and a blank face; and as soon as he was gone, Kate and Louisa began to snatch at one another's presents, each declaring the other had got the best, and that it was a shame, and the way she was always served.

We made up our sweepstakes for the great race, and Albany's hat being duly shaken, we all drew; Louisa hesitating a long time at drawing, teasing Albany to draw for her, and, finally, snatching a paper, with the appropriate sentiment, "Well, here's luck!" I forgot what my number was, but Albany asked to see it, and I showed it him, upon which he nodded with evident pleasure, and told me to put it away in my lemon. Upon this,

Louisa, to please him by taking his hint, put her paper unopened into her money-box, and, of course, never knew what she had drawn.

Then came the time of suspense, broken only by the regular incidents of the people who will cross the course, and are sent back unless they can dodge the policemen; and of the poor dog, whose nerves must be shaken for the following year, by the frightful yelling which the rabble raise as he runs down the line. One really almost hates creatures who are capable of making such noises, and for such a purpose. And then came the false alarm, and then the cry, taken up instinctively by thousands upon thousands; and then the instants of strange excitement even to those who scarcely knew the name of a single horse in the struggle, and certainly have not the least interest in the event. What these rushing moments must be to a man who has a quiet home far away, with a gentle, sorrowful wife, and poor little children in it, and all their money in the world staked upon those maddening horses, I am afraid to think. Albany will never bet again—though I am sure I do not know why I write that here.

We were all standing up in and about the carriage, intently watching the race, papa with a tele-

scope, and some of us with opera-glasses; and Albany had so posted himself, that there was certainly no danger of my falling. Round rushed the horses, pattering and thundering, and a shifting mass of shining silks, of various colours, confused the eye, and defied one's powers of memory—blue cap and yellow sleeves, and purple cap and white sleeves, and green cap and ultra-marine sleeves—each might be anybody's and everybody's colours for all I could recollect. Another moment or two, and all was over, and hundreds of thousands of pounds, all over the kingdom, had changed owners.

"What's the number, Albany?" said papa, trying to bring his telescope to bear upon the great figure they were hanging out.

"Miss Brompton has it in her lemon," said Mr. Albany. And to my surprise, the next moment he sprang from the carriage, dived under another, and presently came out, dragging a savage-looking man, buttoned up to the neck, and with no rim to his hat. The man strove to get away, but clearly had not the slightest chance. Albany brought him up to the carriage.

"Something of yours, Mrs. De Stringas, this person has to return."

"Of mine!" said my aunt, in great surprise. "I have not lost anything."

"He is one of those ingenious people who find things which are not exactly lost," said Albany. "Produce it, my man."

The man scowled, and shook back his head sulkily, but did not obey.

"As you please," said Albany. "This way, then." And holding his prisoner with a firm grasp, he drew him some paces from the carriage, when an apparition approached which changed the plans of the captive. It was a mounted policeman, who, at Albany's signal, came galloping up.

"All is serene, Sir," said the prisoner, putting something into Albany's hand; and in an instant slipping from his grasp, and darting off at a rapid pace. The officer gave chase, but was soon defeated by the artful manœuvres of the culprit.

"No matter," said Albany, putting what he had recovered into Aunt Hester's hand. "You must have dropped it, when standing on the edge of the carriage. I saw him dive."

It was the beautiful emerald and pearl brooch which had been given as a testimonial to my Uncle's noble and spirited conduct in the election business. To think that such a reward of virtue should fall into the hands of an unprincipled person! Papa discoursed very curiously upon this to Albany, as we came home from the Derby.

CHAPTER X.

"LADY OSSIAN!" said papa, "and at this hour in the morning" (for we were seated *tête-à-tête*, as usual, at an unusually late breakfast, in town, a few days after the Derby), "what on earth brings her unearthlyship here? Will you see, Violet, my dear?"

As I was leaving the room, Lady Ossian entered. What a handsome Scotchwoman she must have been, in other days, and in the style of Black Agnes of Dunbar! The keen dark eyes are still vivid, but the tall thin figure, and severe features, now instil awe rather than admiration into timid people. She has a terrific Scotch pedigree, and I believe her ancestor was the sharp-witted nobleman who, when Sir Henry de Bohun was struck down by Robert Bruce, in the presence of the two armies at Bannockburn, dismounted, under pretence of assisting the king, and subsequently contrived, by mistake, to find himself on the back

of the splendid English charger instead of his own rather dubious animal. The family is understood to have persevered in the ancestral practice of helping themselves, but, upon all occasions, piously attributing such help to Providence. Lady Ossian is a childless dowager, tolerably well tochered, and she devotes herself a good deal to the conversion of Hottentots and to the extirpation of Papists. She is certainly a person of very imposing appearance, and her expression is what papa calls *falconesque*. In a drawing-room she looks exceedingly aristocratic; but you would not think her out of place if you saw her perched upon a mountain crag, and glowering upon a harmless flock of innocent pic-nic people below—a proud hawk watching the poor pigeons pecking about. I have my own special reasons for adding that Lady Ossian is aunt to Sir Fingal Mervyn, the Grenadier Guardsman, introduced in my last chapter.

"I want to run away with your little girl, Mr. Brompton, for a few hours, if you can spare her," said Lady Ossian, looking at me so very hawkishly, that I could quite imagine her making a great swoop across the coffee-cups and clutching me.

"She will answer for her own engagements," replied papa, looking at me mischievously. "I

never venture to interfere with the young lady." As if he ever gave me a hint of a wish, dear old thing, without my feeling quite grateful to him for showing how I could please him.

"I am going to Exeter Hall," said Lady Ossian, "and I should like Violet to accompany me. I have reserved tickets, of course; only the sooner we are there the better,"

And we were there very soon. Lady Ossian would not enter the Hall at the great front door with the Greek word, meaning, I think, "Brotherly Love," over it, but went in at the side entrance. She dashed fearlessly at the angles and labyrinths of the interior, which is divided into sets of chambers, the abode of Brotherly Love in All its Branches. Until one has read the inscriptions on the ground-glass in the doors, it is difficult to imagine how easily the labour of love can be subdivided and split up. One set of subscribers exhausts its spiritual affections upon the Polynesian heathen; another sends love and tracts to the Copts and Nubians; and another, again, expends its philanthropy upon the Juvenile Troglodytes of Moldavia. I did not, as we went along, notice the apartments of any society in aid of English children or of English emigrants; but I suppose these were up-stairs. Lady Ossian hurried me

on, through various passages, and presently we came into a very low-roofed place, where I could hear the buzz of a great multitude. In a few minutes we were in the front of a little gallery, high in air, where we could see everybody in the Hall, and everybody could see us from head to foot.

Such an assembly! It is a striking sight, let the object be what it may, to see several thousand people peacefully gathered together, in excitement, perhaps, but in no disorder, and concentrating their attention upon a subject which addresses it by no help of show or splendour. For in Exeter Hall, itself one of the ugliest rooms in the world, there is literally nothing to see, except the crowd that fills it. But this sight quite bewildered me for some moments, for I never beheld anything like it, and I felt, for the first time, the imposing presence of a multitude.

A large clock just then announced twelve, and, punctual as its own works, there entered upon all parts of the platform a file of gentlemen, some of them carrying blue wands. This was a signal for great applause, other blue wands, planted in different parts of the room, rapping violently. The file speedily took possession of the various chairs, except the central one. A thin, precise-looking gentleman, in an evening dress of black, with a high

white cravat, and a look of sanctimonious self-satisfaction, then turned to the meeting, and said in what I thought was an unnecessarily solemn voice (but I hear he is a Member of Parliament, and adopts the same agreeable undertaker's manner, whether discussing the means of Church Reform, or the price of members' mutton chops)—

"I move that the Honourable Jasper Crowsfoot do take the chair."

"Jasper Crowsfoot!" I thought. "Why that is the elderly gentleman who makes such a noise at the Opera, and shouts out when he throws a bouquet at Cerito, just as a cricketer cries 'Play!' when he delivers a ball. What can he be doing here?"

There was quite a sensation, for it seems that Exeter Hall rather likes an occasional recruit from the Opera stalls (if he have a title of any kind), and pets him very indulgently. "A most gentlemanly man, a perfect gentleman, and brother to an Earl," passed rapidly along our little gallery. And then forth stepped the Honourable Jasper, looking, perhaps, a little worn with forty years on town, but with a beautiful black wig, the whitest of teeth, lemon-coloured gloves, and a geranium flower in his button-hole. He made the meeting two very fine George the Fourth bows, smiled at

the ladies in the galleries, dropped iuto his chair, and put up his glass, all as naturally as if the overture were over, and he were about to listen to Grisi's *aria d'intrata*.

There was some introductory business, and then a frightened-looking gentleman read a long report. I suppose his nerves kept alternating between weakness and sudden strength, for he mumbled and hurried over most part of it; but would sometimes suddenly shout forth a few lines—not at all important ones—in a dreadfully loud voice.

But I had not much opportunity of listening to the speeches; for Lady Ossian said that she had brought me there that we might have a little quiet uninterrupted conversation. And, fixing her dark falcon eyes on me, she asked, in a low distinct voice,

"Is it true that you are going to be married, my dear?"

I was naturally a good deal astonished at the question, but I assured her ladyship that nobody had taken the trouble to obtain my consent, at least, to any such arrangement.

"But you are engaged, Miss Brompton," she said with a still more intense glance than before. I felt that I was colouring under her staring eyes; but I answered that nothing of the kind was the case.

But I was afraid to ask, in return, whose name she had coupled with mine.

"We are not speaking the mere language of the world," she said, almost severely. "I am to take your word that there is no marriage in view for you."

I tried to pluck up a little spirit, and to say something about endeavouring always to make a sincere answer to a proper question; but it was difficult in that haughty presence, and my sentence was scarcely complete.

"I know," she said, with a petrifying sort of smile, "that young ladies educated in the world's ways, see no harm in what are profanely called, I believe, white lies, about such matters; but I do not imagine that you would take such a liberty with me as to let me proceed upon a false basis."

Her language was growing so very mysterious, that my curiosity got the better of my imagination, and I waited in silence to hear what her proceeding was going to be.

"What I am about to say to you, Mis Brompton, is strictly confidential between us. That is distinctly understood?"

"I have no secrets from papa, Lady Ossian," I answered; "and I do not suppose that you would advise a daughter to promise any concealments

from her father." I know that I put this speech upon the least little stilts; but I did feel rather out of temper with Lady Ossian for hinting that I might not mind telling stories.

"There is a discretion which does not imply secrecy, exactly," retured Lady Ossian—but not quite so severely as before—"and I rely upon yours. Now, you inform me that your hand is free. A member of my family has authorised me to make proposals for it."

"I am sure I am very much honoured," I said, hardly knowing whether I ought to laugh at this regal way of management.

"That is a mere phrase of compliment," said Lady Ossian; "but not altogether untrue. Of course we are all equal, in a certain sense, being all of us wretched, unworthy, miserable creatures, and crawling worms; but the Ossian and Mervyn families have two dukes, and four marquises, in colateral branches, and a direct, uubroken pedigree of a thousand years. Your father is—in worldly language, I mean—an excellent man; but I believe his remotest ancestor was a bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard."

"At a time when I suppose his contemporaries, the Ossians and Mervyns, were little qualified to make use of his wares," I replied, quite pertly;

for who is going to have her ancestors insulted? I do believe Lady Ossian was rather pleased with me for striking a blow for them.

"Very well, little girl," she said, almost graciously, "only quite wrong, as Lady Mervyn may hereafter find out in her husband's family history."

"Lady Mervyn!" I repeated. "I did not know——"

"I am speaking of yourself," she said. "My nephew, Sir Fingal Mervyn, with whom you are well acquainted, proposes to confer that title on you."

The little British Grenadier had actually sent his aunt to make a declaration for him. I thought of him as he appeared on the Derby Day, with his hat full of the spoils of the knock-'em-downs; and I could not help laughing at his employing an ambassadress to me.

"Sir Fingal," I said, "has never given me the slightest idea that I was to be so honoured."

"Had he done so," replied Lady Ossian, "any expectations he may entertain from my favour would have been at an end. Members of our family are not in the habit of what is called Courtship. But after your reply, you will receive all due attentions from Sir Fingal Mervyn."

"Does your ladyship wish for that reply on the instant?" I asked with much composure. "It would perhaps appear more respectful if some delay——"

Lady Ossian glanced very keenly at me; but I suppose she could not conceive the possibility of any answer but one being given; and she begged that I would communicate with her at my own time. I wonder what she would have said if she had known that, during her stately sentence I could not help thinking that I ought to return to her the wooden lemon Sir Fingal had given me at Epsom. She pressed my hand with a very firm grip, and dropped the subject. And at this moment the great meeting burst into the loudest laughter, the oratorial undertaker having made a most successful joke about the Pope's Eye on a leg of Protestant mutton. Lady Ossian took advantage of the renewed applause (led by the Honourable Mr. Crowsfoot, who actually cried "Bravo!") to leave the hall. She took me home, and I suppose I need not say more about the answer papa wrote her that afternoon, than that it did not justify the British Grenadier in hoping that Violet Brompton would ever sign herself Violet Mervyn.

CHAPTER XI.

If ever anybody had no right to make an offer to another person, that was the position of Mr. Verdigris, the antiquary, as regarded me. For I always liked him, and derived a great deal of instruction from his conversation; and to add to his ingratitude, I may mention that it was entirely owing to my cutting out an advertisement, and enclosing it to papa, that the latter bought a little cabinet of coins of the Lower Empire, and presented it to Mr. Verdigris on his fiftieth birthday. And then his dear old sister, Virty Verdigris, had become fonder of me than of any body in the world, except of her brother, and we were going on so pleasantly, till it occurred to him to alter our positions. I cannot think what put such nonsense into his head. I had about as much expectation of a proposal from his statue of Phocion.

He lives at Brighton, and while we were staying

there we used to go to his house a good deal. Whenever he got a new old coin, or relic of any kind, he always sent Virty round to invite me to come and see it, and the dear old creature, who knew nothing whatever about anything except making everybody comfortable, invariably brought the strangest messages. One day she was particularly anxious for me to come, because Stacey—that is to say Eustace—had just received some Wooden Halfpence made by Dean Swift the Draper, and another time I was to go and see a piece of a bonnet dug up at Flodden, though, as dear Virty said, what part of a bonnet a round bit of gold could be, she could not guess. But she was just as pleased to see Stacey happy in showing his collection, as if she could have called over all the Cæsars as accurately as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who tells us in his life of poor Lord George Betting-book that the most solemn event in the history of Christianity took place in the reign of Augustus. Mr. Verdigris is a delicate-looking person, with exceedingly long white fingers, and nails which might easily be cut into pens. He is very small, and pale, and mild, and nearly bald, having only a thin fringe of grey hair round the centre of his head, which flushes up to the very crown upon the least excitement. And

he always wears a long frock coat, buttoned up to the chin, where it meets a white cravat. I suppose that he has plenty of money, for he is always buying curiosities, and giving away charity, for he is one of the kindest-hearted creatures in the world.

Mr. Verdigris had been re-arranging his collection, and sent Virty to fetch me to see it in its new order. The work had occupied him for some days, and he had obstinately repulsed all his sister's offers of assistance. "My dear," she said, "while he was gone for a walk, I stuck more of his coins and medals into those little holes than he had done in two days; but when he came in he burst out laughing, and turned all my work out, saying that I had introduced King Herod to an Innocent Pope, and there would be another massacre like that of Bartholomew Fair." When I arrived, Mr. Verdigris himself did the honours in a much more learned way, and begged me to accompany him all round his little gallery, and see that he had put everything into chronological order—from Young Memnon to Louis Napoleon. Poor Virty followed us, and kept up a gentle fire of notes upon the antiquary's text. Of course, I do not pretend to remember a millionth part of what I was told, especially as laughing with Virty interrupted my attention

sadly. When her brother was showing me the Roman As, she ventured to suggest that the Roman must have been one for giving such a name to a piece of money, but she supposed an ass was coined for small bets, just as we say a poney for larger ones. And among some ancient curiosities was a relic supposed to having been used in making a philter, and this excited Virty's great contempt, as she could not at all see how the water was to be passed through it. And she really made a sort of joke over a brass mirror, declaring that from all she had heard of the Roman ladies such a looking-glass must have reflected them very faithfully. The dreadful faces she made when her brother was describing the Roman practice of bringing live mullet to table, that they might die upon the plates of the epicures, were wonderful; but his mention that offending slaves were thrown into the lamprey pond, elicited a delightful piece of English history from her.

"Ah!" she said, "that's like what I read in Hume's history many years ago about one of our kings, who was killed by lampreys, because, it says, they did not agree with the Constitution. I forget which king it was, Stephen I think, but the moral is the same."

"In that case Henry the First will do, Virtue dear!" said Mr. Verdigris quietly.

"I dare say that was the man," answered Virty. "To be sure it couldn't be Stephen, for he was stoned. I have seen the picture of it in that church in Walbrook that went into Chancery with the Lord Mayor, and got dilapidated."

"They teach young ladies better now than they did in your time, my dear old Virty," said Mr. Verdigris. "Here is Miss Violet Brompton could tell you the names, dates, and characters of every one of the sovereigns of Europe, from Charlemagne's time."

"Indeed, you must give me credit for nothing of the kind," I said, "but I think if I were to study your collection of coins often, I might be much better informed. They are the best helps to memory I can imagine."

To my surprise, as I said this, the face and head of Mr. Verdigris flushed up into a uniform crimson. He looked at his sister with an odd sort of smile, and said,

"Virtue."

"Stacey," she answered, with an equally significant look.

"Shall I say it," he asked in quite a flutter.

"*I* should, Stacey," replied Mrs. Virty.

He turned to me, and his redness, which had slightly toned down, took a new and more glowing tint as he did so. I could not conceive what was the matter. He kept on smiling in a kindly, but an uncomfortable way, fidgetted with his hands, and even began to scratch with his long nails on the glass of one of the medal cases.

"You would like," he stammered out, "to study these things very often?"

"Under your direction," I said, "and in their proper order here, I think it would be very pleasant." Now, I said this because it flashed across my mind that he might perhaps be thinking of spoiling his collection for the sake of making me a present, and this I would not have let him do. But my answer was the most unfortunate one I could have made.

"Here, and under my direction, Virty," he repeated, looking at her with a face beaming with pleasure. "There could not be better encouragement. That study you might undertake at all times you pleased, Miss Brompton," he said, earnestly and respectfully. "I am not a man of many words, and indeed I feel my deficiency, painfully, when I wish to say what I would say now—but—you—you are above affectation and coquetry—you have known me a long time, and

Virty loves you very much. Will you—will you accept all that you see here, and, with it, its owner?"

I never said I was a heroine, and if I had, everybody would have found me out long ago. But, supposing I had asserted the slightest pretensions to heroineship, they would all have been crushed for ever when I came to this passage in my history. I looked at him for a moment to be quite sure I understood him, and then I looked at Virty, and saw in her dear old face such a mixture of pleasure and anxiety that—there is no use in pretending that I did not—I began to cry.

I am not skilful at analysing my sensations, but here was a good, kind, learned, gentlemanly man, whom I both respected and liked, and who had suddenly placed me in a position from which there was no escaping without giving him pain. The situation was simple enough, and perhaps I was simple enough for crying over it, but I did cry, and there is the truth. He looked very much distressed, and Virty came up to me and took my hand. But I struggled for self-command, for I would not leave these kind creatures in a moment's doubt, and self-command came.

"Dear Mr. Verdigris," I said, but not at all steadily, "pray forget what you have said. You

do me very great honour in thinking me worthy of such a thing, and I do assure you I am very grateful to you. But our ages are so different—I am quite a child, and you know I know your birthday,"—and I tried to smile, and pointed to the silver plate on the cabinet we had given him—"and altogether it is quite impossible. But do take my hands, and say that you will not be angry with me, and will go on giving me instruction." For I could not bear to think of quarrelling with him.

He looked at me very steadily for a minute or so, and then he said, quietly, and almost sadly—

"Yes. There are thirty years between us, and they ought to have taught me to know myself better; they *have* taught me how to value you, or I should not have said what you have heard. Forget it; if I remember it, you shall never see that I do. We will always be friends—you and I, and Virty"—and he took a hand of each; "and—and—will you come to see me to-morrow, and we will go through the Emperors—I have very good coins of the Emperors." And pressing our hands, he walked quickly out of the room.

"You spoke quite right, dear," said Mrs. Virty, very kindly, and wiping her eyes; for she, it

seems, had followed my wise example. "And that's the last word you'll ever hear about it, if you come here, as I hope you will, a thousand times. And Stacey must keep to his Roman asses, and his rows of nobles, and his pieces of bonnets, and his Johnny groats, and all the rest of his tattermedallions."

CHAPTER XII.

MISS VIOLET'S *Papa to an old legal friend.*

"MY DEAR ZACHARY,—You are an excellent conveyancer, and your pupil, Mr. Albany Swellington, is a very earnest and honourable young man. But you can only speak according to your respective lights, which at this present writing, are as false lights as ever Cornishman hung out to sea-captain. Your pupil has proposed to my Violet, and has been rejected, but whatever he may think, or you may say, Albany will not betake himself to the bed of the Thames, or even to a cradle on the banks of an Australian Pactolus.

"You old spinner of nets to catch remaindermen, and reversioners, and inheritors to the third and fourth generation, are *you* coming out with a heart? You pretending to mind the interests of anybody who is already born? You, whose protective care, for the last forty years (ever since you betook yourself to Lincoln's Inn upon pretty Miss

Esther Gargle refusing your arm, and going with Volunteer Jopps to see the Allied Sovereigns in the Park), has been devoted to the prospective babies who are to 'take' in future ages, under your reticulated entails. And you write to me in all sincerity, to plead a love cause for your pupil, who will do something you are well assured, to be rid of a hateful life. Is that all you know about assurance on life, my old Zachary? The assurance society that gave you three hundred guineas to make tight work of their title to the Claretcup estates (comprising the townships of Swaggerty, Farrago, and Killbayliffe, Connaught), must have been slightly cheated in you. Zachary, you are not half informed upon the matter; and I tell you so point-blank, because to the conveyancing intellect, I know that intimation cometh as a dead stopper, or estoppel, as you musically call it.

"So he has been reading in your chambers for six months in the most exemplary manner—copying your precedents with a steam-power of scribble; never sending out your hired clerk for beer in the daytime, as is the manner of other pupils; never drawing Ceritoes and Rosatis on your draft-paper, and leaving them about for the inspection of the evangelical attorneys who come to see you; never fencing or wrestling with his

friends in your front parlour while consultations were going on in the back room; and never discomfiting your clients, in your absence, by volunteer opinions that their claims are all moonshine, and that they had better abandon them, and not make fools of themselves. You speak as a worthy, orderly man, whose soul has been vexed by youths with animal spirits and inconsiderate minds. I am glad that Albany has come at last to comfort you, and it speaks well for your nature that you are trying to elicit some comfort for him. But I have lived, and loved, and so forth, and if you had kicked Volunteer Jopps and married Esther, as you ought to have done, you would have known enough to agree with me in thinking that Master Albany has already found some crumbs of comfort for himself. You never put the language of a testator to the rack to wrench out the meaning you wanted, as he has twisted, and turned, and tortured every word spoken at our interview at Brighton here on Sunday evening. I know the process. The word 'lace,' in the 'Tale of a Tub,' was discovered by Lord Peter (who wished to wear the prohibited finery) to mean, in the original, a 'broomstick,' which, therefore, he dutifully abstained from affixing to his coat. That is a mild marginal reading compared to what a young gen-

tleman or lady, with sympathies, will make out of a few kindly words of parent or guardian. And I gave Master Albany a good many, but I rejected his proposals.

"Do you spy any comfort for him in those last four words, Zachary of the Entails? I say, *I* rejected him. For my Violet *had* made up her mind to marry him, and, between ourselves, though I employ the past tense, I do not imply that her mood is altered. My private impression is that she *will* marry him, but she is the best little girl in the whole world,* as well as the prettiest (what are you laughing at, Zachary Kingsilver?), and she will take care that, theatrically speaking, the words, 'Who giveth this Violet to be married to this Albany?' shall be the cue for, 'I do—her father.' Meantime, do you think your bemoaning pupil has not said to himself at least a billion of times—'I am certain she loves me, and it was only the old man after all, and I shall be Lord Chancellor one of these days, and Lord Eldon ran away with——' *He* go over the bridge—*he* go over to Australasia!

"I have nothing to say against him in the matter. He had managed to secure Violet's affections, and to make her fully aware that he was

* *Note by the Editress.* O, papa!—*V.*

devoted to her. And armed with some sort of permission on the child's part he came to me, and made a revelation in a frank and manly manner. He said that he had about four hundred a year under his father's will, and having never had anything to do but spend it, he had quite done that, and about four hundred a year more; which, if he had been a Currency Questioner, he would have said was not represented by capital of his own: but which he explicitly described as debt. Having no object of his own, he had been for five years adopting other people's objects. Sir Crackey Bouncer stalked deer, and Albany laid down on his stomach and crawled with Crackey over half the hills of Scotland. Mr. Spanker Boom went yachting, and Mr. Swellington eat Gamble's preserved meats in Ramsgate Harbour. The Honourable Mumble Fitzplumb stood for a borough, and Albany speechified from the Cross Keys window, and chucked the chins of constitutional babies. Young Hockley Pastern ran horses, and young Albany Swellington backed them, and sometimes rode them. And thus, holding the tenor of everybody's way who came in his own, he had lounged on through life, but not so slowly as that the constable could at all keep up with him. For all these things cost money, and ready money, too,

while coats, boots, and studs are being made into 'materials for history,' with notes by occasional discounters. All this he told me, not carelessly, but as if, having discovered that life might be something better than a lounge, he was anxious to fall into quick step: and by way of getting into marching order, he had, some months ago paid you a hundred guineas (raised with no small difficulty) for leave to sit in your chambers and study Lord St. Leonards on 'Vendors and Purchasers.' Imagine little Violet having the honour of procuring his lordship a new reader.

"I pointed out to him that, upon his own showing, he was in no position to marry: for though I would not demand that a man should work himself into middle life before making an offer, I did not think that marriage should be the very first proof that he was in earnest. Congratulating him—not in mere phrases, but cordially—on the honourable course he was pursuing, I declined to let Violet enter into any engagement; nor would I hold out any promise for the future. If she loves him, and if the stuff is in him (and, you, old Zachary, you are to keep this to yourself), I dare say we shall have another interview some day, and then there may be a job for you, Zachary of the Settlements.

"Albany went away looking very unhappy, and Violet has, I believe, had a little private cry, or so, but she is too sensible and light-hearted, as well as too affectionate to pout. Besides she is consoled, I will swear, by a perfect certainty that Her Majesty will, one of these days, order a new woolsack, expressly for Lord Chancellor Swellington. Many a true heart, Zach, as you know well, has clung to such a conviction through years of solitude, and struggle, and sorrow, and, living upon hope, has died fasting. But we shall, perhaps, manage things a little better than that; though, candidly speaking, I do not much expect to see Baron Albany kneel in the House of Lords, and present the Queen with her Speech.

"Now, my old friend, do you understand matters better? If your pupil drowns himself, he shall not have Violet; and I have as much intention of sending her to the diggings as he has of going there. So no more at present from

"Your old schoolfellow,

"BRIDLEGOOSE BROMPTON.

"*Brighton.*

"P.S. If A. S. chooses to take you into his confidence, and through any of your attorney friends you like to put his debts in train for gradual

liquidation, I should not much mind lending you some money to that end. But be horribly discreet —keep me out of sight—and don't spoil a salutary process, Zacharias. Come down, and have a Brill."

CHAPTER XIII.

O! IF I were writing a sentimental story about somebody else, what a beautiful page I would try to compose here, showing what her feelings ought to have been after the event described by papa in the last chapter. Only, then, I am not a heroine. I am certain, for papa has said so (and he is always right), that I must have given Albany cause to think I loved him sincerely, and I felt very grieved that papa did not see his way to giving his consent to our marriage. But if I could have seen, at the time, the dear kind letter which made my last chapter, and had known how papa was planning and plotting for our happiness, I should have cried for joy ten times as much as I did for sorrow. I felt so sure that all would come right, from the moment papa had thought it worth his while to understand Albany, that I went about the house as cheerfully as possible, and every day put Eau de Cologne into papa's handkerchief, picked

the shells off his eggs, and dried the *Times* for him, without ever looking up mournfully, and saying, "Behold your work, my iron-hearted sire, my lip may writhe with a smile, but my wounded heart languishes into premature interment." Indeed, such a speech would have been beyond my powers; but papa read it from a penny but popular romance of domestic life, a number of which he found on the rug in the breakfast room at Brighton, and politely returned, in the tongs, to the indignant subscriber and housemaid when she brought in the coal-scuttle. I think it right to quote it, because doing so shows that I know what ought to have been said here, if I were writing for popularity.

But when I say that I soon had another offer, and received it civilly, what ever will be thought of me? Patrons of popular literature will turn away their faces in contempt. Another's vows, another spouse, while Hope lies crushed in Gloom! away, avaunt, I won't, I shan't, go, harrow not the Tomb. But it is true, and what would make the fact still more valuable to a declamatory young lady, the offer was an aristocratic one, and therefore one which she would, of course, have trampled upon with increased bitterness of contempt. Lord Anthracite proposed to me.

Lord Anthracite is a middle-aged man, by no means rich, or influential, or notorious. He is an excellent, easy-going, kind-hearted person, whose father mortgaged, to buy horses, nearly all the property his grandfather had not mortgaged to buy voters. Consequently the present peer's establishment is a simple one, with which he is simple enough to be content, and has neither sold himself for a rich wife, nor his proxy for "something from those fellows"—I hope I am not unlady-like in using words I hear, sometimes, from gentlemen who ought to know how Governments should be spoken of. His lordship has very few relations, and I think the only one he much cares about, is a widow cousin, who was once a beauty, and, on the credit of past glories, gives herself many airs. She has managed to obtain apartments at one of the country Palaces, and may be seen at a window on the days the common people are let into the gardens. She evidently regards them as trespassers, and almost makes faces at them if they venture to look up at the little forests of hydrangias and calceolarias which cover her window-sills. Lord Anthracite was once her suitor, but was rejected for a half-caste Crœsus, who died from a determination of brandy to the head, leaving all his money to the Jesuit priest who had

converted him. The widow returned from India, and found it difficult to get another husband, so she forgave Lord Anthracite, but he would never renew his offer, and contented himself with paying her for years twice the attention of any *fiancé*. He was—and is, for I have not interfered—perpetually driving down to the Palace with grapes, strawberries, and peaches, at seasons when the price of one of the baskets he buys would keep a quiet family for a fortnight. This is his only extravagance, I believe, and he is punished for it by her capriciousness, for, in his presence, she will often give his beautiful fruit to her monkey or her page. But he never seems vexed with her, and if, on arriving at the country Palace with a pine-apple, she should send him back to Covent Garden to change it for sixpennyworth of oranges, he would be rather pleased—not that he is in the least degree a silly person.

When her Majesty was about to open Parliament, Lord Anthracite (whose quiet, old world stories papa likes very much—they seem to have more reality than the smart anecdotes, with bits of French in them, with which dining-out gentlemen pay for their dinners in these days), knowing I had never seen the ceremony, obtained tickets for his cousin and me. I was delighted, and papa

declares that I actually "fidgetted" to get him to the House of Lords by twelve o'clock. There we were to meet Lord Anthracite and Mrs. Lall Gong Bangle. He was punctual enough, but she was not, and after waiting an hour, and seeing all the peeresses go in, a note was brought him, in which Mrs. Lall Gong informed him that the day was really too hot for sights, and she hoped he would get tickets for the prorogation instead. He looked more angry than ever I saw him before, but there was no time to waste, and nobody to take care of me.

"I could put you in your place," he said, "but it is a bore not to have something to tell you who people are—it is too bad of Julia, almost, but she *is* very delicate—ah! there is the Duchess of Llangollen, I will speak to her."

"Certainly, with the greatest pleasure," said, a minute afterwards, one of the kindest and most cheerful voices I ever heard (to be sure, one would have been actually disappointed if any other kind of voice had belonged to that sunshiny face), "and I am only sorry she cannot sit with me. But I will take care of her, and I am glad to see," she added, laughing, "that you have condescended to find out at last that there is somebody else in the world besides people who live in Palaces.

But dear," she continued, taking my hand as I was presented, "we are late, I mean you are, so we will go in at once; and you go and robe," she said to Lord Anthracite. Papa nodded to me, and the Duchess took me through halls and corridors, until we reached a splendid room, full of colour and carving, and a perfect crowd of officers in uniform, glittering cuirasses and waving feathers; beef-eaters, with their wonderful ruffs; theatrical-looking pages; noblemen in scarlet robes, barred according to rank; two or three judges (who laughed more than anybody), and a few ladies splendidly dressed, but nobody had such diamonds as my conductress. The throng made way for her instantly; she had a look and a smile for everybody—and we passed through a beautifully carved doorway, and were in the House of Lords.

Of course I had seen the chamber, but the seeing it empty or with a dozen carelessly dressed gentlemen scattered about it, is quite another thing from seeing it applied to the purpose for which I am certain it was built. Mr. Barry meant, (and I wonder he has never had the courage to say so) that the Lords should meet in one of their comfortable libraries or refreshment rooms, and that the "House" should be kept for

the Queen and the ladies. The gilding, the coloured glass, the frescoes, the statues, the heraldry, and all the rich and glittering ornament at once fall into their place in the picture, when the body of the chamber is filled with ladies, and the gorgeous throne-work becomes a mere background to the figure of the Lady of England. However, these were after thoughts, for, at the moment, I could only think of what was going to be done with me. Such a polite gentleman (and yet his tone was a little peremptory, as if he were accustomed to deal with unreasonable requests) came up, and showing the Duchess a seat on the benches to the left, looked at me doubtfully, as much as to say, "Surely Lady Bertha's hair is lighter than that."

"I want you, Sir Tiberius," said the Duchess, "to put this young lady into the very best place in the whole House, and I am sure you will."

"Not a Peeress, I think?" said the gentleman, bowing.

"Not at present," said the Duchess, demurely.

"In that case, this way," said the gentleman; and he conducted me to the right of the Throne, and below a compartment, in front of which were some bishops, and behind them glittering attachés, in all the uniforms of the civilised and uncivilised

world. There were several rows of benches, full of untitled ladies, and they looked at me as we ladies always look at a stranger, with the expression which says, "There is no room, or if there is, I am not going to make it for you." But Sir Tiberius was premptory, and a most vinegar-faced dowager was obliged to put up with only about as much room as was necessary, instead of expanding over three times her rightful seat. The Duchess came over, saw me comfortably placed, and said that we should meet after the ceremony.

The vinegar-faced Dowager examined me haughtily for some time, and then said in a grim voice—

"Who was that lady?"

"The Duchess of Llangollen," I replied.

O, dear, how she softened! Had I never been there before? O, how nice, as she could tell me everything. Those seats opposite were for the Peeresses and their families; these for untitled people. The judges were clustering, I could see, in the middle—their wigs like a bunch of mushrooms. A row of noblemen had the front places all round. That was the Duke; how well he looked. Those dukes up there? No, my dear, those are the newspapers—I mean the writers. That is Lord Jones, whose wife ran away from

him, and there is Lord Smith, who ran away from his wife. That is the Duke of Hecla, celebrated for logical powers and red hair. There is the Premier — no, there, with his glass to his eye, meditating a joke, I dare say, on somebody. The nobleman with the curl is Lord Malmesbury; he is bending to the Austrian Official in blue. That is an Oriental prince; he murdered with his own hand sixty of his uncles and aunts—I am in great hopes to meet him at a party next week—look at his emeralds! Ah! the guns—how punctual the Queen always is!

And then came the procession, and the imposing group into which it formed itself around the Sovereign, making with its accessories a whole Constitutional History of England, told to the eye and illuminated. And then the formalities, the stately Speaker of the Commons, with his black-coated constituents swarming behind him, and his proud but courtly address on their behalf. And then a kneeling Chancellor, presenting the speech to Her Majesty—how much better Albany will look when he does it—and then a clear and silvery delivery by the Queen, who leaves you the impression that, though She is reading the speech, you have got it by heart. And then the farewell by Her Majesty, and the closing and intermingling

of the most variegated crowd that ever assembles.

Lord Anthracite, in his robes, soon brought me to the Duchess, and she was kind enough to ask me to come to see her beautiful and celebrated house. This I was much pleased at. I was less pleased that some days afterwards his Lordship intimated that it rested with myself to sit on the left hand of the Queen, at the prorogation. However, he received my answer very good-humouredly; and the other day sent me some extraordinary nectarines, of which I believe he defrauded Mrs. Lall Gong Bangle.

CHAPTER XIV.

I HAVE been heartily vexed, and there is not a soul upon whom I can throw the blame, except one dear old soul, upon whom I would not throw any for the world—Aunty Ratchet, who came to stay with me during papa's absence at an election. I wanted papa to "pair off" with Mr. Plumberton, a particular friend of his, who was going to support the opposite candidate: but Mr. Plumberton said, laughing, that he could not agree to this, as his candidate's committee had written to beg that no voter would pair, unless he had broken his leg, or was too ill to go down, in which cases he might, as he would then clearly rob the other side of a good vote, giving nothing in return. Papa said that the committee's suggestion was as sharp a piece of Old Bailey attorneyism as he had ever seen; and he was quite glad it had proceeded from the Exeter Hall party, as otherwise mere

worldly people might have thought it scarcely honest.

While papa was gone, an opera-box was sent him, which I gave to Aunty. She, in her good nature, immediately thought of some people who had never been to the Opera, and upon whom she thought to confer a marvellous treat. The Gittingses live at Rotherhithe, and I believe they are very well off, and, according to Aunty Ratchet, very comfortable, as indeed she said—after the box had been sent away—anybody might see, who would go to Rotherhithe on a Sunday afternoon, and observe Mr. Gittings, with his coat off, smoking a pipe at the parlour window.

"I suppose, Aunt, dear," I said in some perturbation, "he knows he must go to Covent Garden with his coat and without his pipe?"

"He? Vily, darling! Catch him out of bed after ten o'clock! But he will send his wife and daughter, and I suppose Margaret's intended will escort them—a very genteel young man, something in a lace house, I fancy."

So I thought no more about the matter, and on the Saturday evening for which the box had been sent us, Aunt Ratchet and I had quietly sat down, I to read and she to listen to a new novel—the greatest pleasure the dear old thing can experience,

provided the book is one she can cry over a good deal. And as anybody who can write at all can write afflicting scenes, there is no difficulty in selecting a book to Aunty's taste. We had fairly begun, and a shocking scene—a wife's death by consumption, with savage bailiffs in the house, and poor little children crying for food in the nursery—had just started our first flood of tears, and we were coming to the father's destroying himself, when a carriage stopped at the door. I thought it was papa, and darted out to receive him on the stairs, just in time to make it impossible for the servant to say we were not at home to the Gittingses. Up they came, Mrs. Gittings, and Miss Margaret Gittings, and the young gentleman from the lace house, whose light hair, stiff from the curling irons, white face, and deep voice, struck me less than a most magnificent blue satin cravat, with lace ends and crimson spots, which perfectly arrested the eye. I am certain I gazed at it with the stare papa is so rude about. But I stared more when Mrs. Gittings developed her purpose. She stated, fairly enough, that the present of the box had been one of bewildering magnificence, that neither she nor Meg, nor Mr. Sam Point (who was here introduced), had ever been to the Opera, and that they had come round in the hope of finding

us at home, to beg that Miss Violet (it was of no use, she knew, asking Aunty) would go with them, and put them—as she worded it—in the right way. They *had* found us, and now would I be so very kind?

And then Aunt Ratchet, instead of instantly and emphatically declaring, as became her, that such a thing was impossible—that I was too ill to leave the house—that in a quarter of an hour I was going to be fetched to a party at the Archbishop of Canterbury's—or that my father had written to me, commanding me, under pain of his perpetual anger, to wait his arrival, as he had some painful news for me—or all three excuses together—must look first at me, and then at Mrs. Gettings, and then smile, and then look at all of us, and finally say that she knew I was very fond of music, and there was nothing to keep me at home, and that she was always glad to see young people enjoying themselves—O, I could have pulled the needles out of her knitting for her, I was in such a passion. But what was I to do?—the poor Mrs. Gittings had pleaded her case so truthfully, and, though I had never seen her before, she was an old friend of Aunty's, and I could not tell her I did not want to make acquaintance with the future Mrs. Sam Point, or her *fiancé*, and there was no-

body to help me—and, in short, I thought, as Aunt gave up her dear novel without a murmur, I ought not to be ill-natured—and I assented. If they had been going to be cast into a den of lions, and I had been a Miss Van Amburgh, the cry of joy they all set up at finding a protectress could hardly have been heartier.

"I must dress, Aunt," I said, "but I shall not be long."

"O, I'm sure, Miss, you'll do quite well as you are," said Mr. Sam Point, politely. "Any change would be a change for the wus, *I* should say."

However, I disappeared, and sent for Aunty, and instead of scolding her the least little bit in the world, or letting her see my vexation, I only made her apprise Mr. Point that his splendid blue stock, and all its spots, must be a sacrifice to operatic despotism. He fought hard for his finery, it seems, and I was ready by the time Aunt had persuaded him into a white cravat of papa's, and even that foolish, red-cheeked, petulant Margaret supported him in his obstinacy, and "thought it a great liberty on the part of the keeper of a theatre to dictate what people should wear." However, he put his glories carefully into his pocket, and we went. I piloted the party very quietly, and was very firm about sitting in the back of the box all

the evening, alleging as a reason—and it was a very good one—that the scene was new to the others.

The *Prophète* was performed, but after the first ten minutes I saw they took little interest in it, and Mr. Point frankly said, later, that it was all very fine, but nothing to remember, and give him something he could understand, with tunes that he could whistle next day. Did Margaret remember how the Snambla had been done at the Wells? That was music, if you liked, and when the Snambla dropped her candlestick into the water, and the bridge broke, it was so natural-like.

Margaret, the red-cheeked, assented with almost a spiteful readiness. She seemed anxious to depreciate everything, and was clearly out of humour, and I was the cause, and it would be affectation to pretend I did not know why. She was very smart, and her crisp hair, though not very fine, was elaborately frizzled out, and her brooch was immense, as were her bracelets: she had a great many ribbons of bright colours, and she was altogether showy. I was quietly dressed in white, with my hair plain, and with scarcely an ornament. And yet she managed, though anything but clever, to find out that I looked better than she did, and that Mr. Sam Point was also finding out the fact.

She perfectly snubbed me, and was downright rude when I ventured to tell her what parts of the opera were considered finest; but when I looked away, she was constantly studying my dress, and I was certain that she was making mental memoranda of it.

But this was nothing. An ill-bred girl from Rotherhithe was not likely to put me out of humour. But Mr. Sam Point became actively disagreeable. After the first act, he found out the refreshment-room, and conceived it his duty, between every act thenceforth, to send in masses of confectionery, with ices, jellies, wafers, and cherry-brandy, and to press them upon us with the air of an old-fashioned host doing the honours at dinner. To all my refusals he was quite deaf, and almost forced the glasses of ice into my hand; and then a new idea suddenly striking him in regard to my objections, he urged that, as the box had cost them nothing, it was but fair play that they should "stand treat." Margaret was sulky, and would at first take nothing; but afterwards demanded everything that was not there, sending her lover backwards and forwards incessantly. But Mr. Sam Point did not omit to take care of himself when away, and returned each time with a steadier eye and an unsteadier step, and with his deep voice

thickening. At last his evident admiration for me became perfectly absurd. He took the most elaborated means of assuring me of his respectability; mentioned the sums which passed through his hands weekly, and explained that the house relied solely on his opinion, and that if he said, "Gents, that's the thing to do," the thing was done, and no bones about it. Meantime, poor Margaret, on whom he literally turned his back, was actually ghastly with wrath; and though, if she had had any sense, she would have seen that I was much more annoyed than she could be, she only looked at the matter as an attempt of mine to take her "beau" from her. Finally, when in a moment of playfulness Mr. Point tossed a ratafia cake into her lap, she shook it down with frightful asperity, observing with a vicious snap, that he had "better throw his rubbish where he threw his love." O! how glad I was when Mario finished that glorious song of mingled triumph and despair, and blew up his palace.

In the carriage Mr. Point was more demonstrative than ever, and hoped he might be allowed to improve my acquaintance. I said that we were going out of town, and he then begged my address. I gravely referred him to the *Court Guide*, which he said he should consult next day, as it was bound

up in the *Directory*. And on arriving at home he insisted on shaking hands most cordially, and actually tried to detain me in conversation at the door. Aunty Ratchet's coming down saved this chapter from containing another "Offer."

He stumbled back to the carriage. Mrs. Gittings was asleep. But Margaret Gittings was not—decidedly not. Poor Mr. Point. But he deserved all he may have received, for helping to make my evening unnecessarily disagreeable.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE reads in the newspapers that, owing to the political intrigues of Princess Rougewrinkle (who makes morning calls upon Continental kings, with secret treaties in her golden card-case), one dynasty is not to be "recognised," and another is to go into a state of "fusion," and a third is to retract its "reclamation," and, in fact, all sorts of wonderful tricks are to be played upon nations with the cards that come out of the Princess's card-case. And one hears with even more surprise, that if the wives of any of the next new Ministers should happen to be ladies of Dissenting or Quaker persuasion, there will be another Church revolution or two; Dr. Watts's hymns will drive out Brady and Tate; and when Dr. Sumner asks after the health of Dr. Wilberforce, he will be ordered by the Privy Council to use bad English, and say, "How is thee, Henry?" And yet some people assert that ladies have no power in public matters.

As for myself, I do believe that the more I develope my own character on paper, the less worthy I prove myself of anybody's attention. All the ingredients prescribed for the composition of a heroine slip away from under my pen one after another. I have just discovered that I have no ambition. Had it been otherwise, who knows but that one of these days I might have prevented a "fusion," or insisted on my husband's abolishing all the Bishops? For I have had an offer of a "destiny of distinction," or at least an offer from a gentleman who has quite convinced himself that he is entitled to make such a proposal. Had I pleased, I might have been the betrothed bride of the new member of Parliament for the Muddlegrub burghs. This gentleman has fully made up his mind that he is one of the master-spirits of the age, and that his return for Muddlegrub is by no means the result of an extraordinary outlay by his confiding papa, but a special interference of Providence in favour of a helpless nation. I understand that several gentlemen, holding similar views, are anxiously waiting for the assembling of the new House, all regarding themselves as Coming Men. But Mr. Murkie Glimmer, I am certain, conceives that he has come much more forward than any of his competitors. I shall

watch the reports of the debates with great interest, and look for Mr. Glimmer's speeches with a curiosity which the wives of few members, I am told, exhibit in regard to their husbands' orations.

We had a dinner party, and for some reason or other—certainly not with any view to what followed—papa asked Mr. Glimmer. He came late, but apologised by saying that he had been so engrossed by some Blue Books that he had forgotten the flight of time. I thought I saw a slight smile on the lips of two or three shrewd old City men whom the student had kept waiting, but perhaps it was only from pleasure that they would be kept no longer. At dinner I was placed between one of these gentlemen and the new Member of Parliament. He is a large, fresh-coloured person, with rather an arrogant expression of countenance, and a voice which he obviously labours to render as soft as he can, but which becomes harsh and unpleasant when he loses his self-possession, or grows angry.

"Yau don't read the papers, I suppose," he said, indulgently, in the course of dinner; "it is not to be expected that a lady should take that trouble."

"O yes, I do, very often," I said, adding, not

quite civilly, "I like them so much when Parliament is not sitting, and they have room for reviews of books, and pleasant information."

"Well, perhaps you are right," said Mr. Glimmer. "Indeed, I wish the writers would keep to books, and operas, and things they can understand. I assure you, as a public man, it is quite painful to see how ignorantly they deal with more important topics. I make a point myself of never reading a leading article."

"Better if he did, sometimes, perhaps," muttered my other neighbour to me, "and then he would not have told you that the Emperor of Austria was a foolish old man, completely governed by his wife."

He had said so, certainly, but I had set it down as one of those mistakes which people make in conversation, and which gentlemen, who make them in conversation with young ladies, often think not worth correcting—"dare say the girl did not notice it, or knew no better if she did." But when I mentioned that a friend of ours was gone to fish for salmon in Norway, I was rather surprised to hear the Member of Parliament assert that the fisherman must have obtained a Russian passport.

"Good again," growled the City merchant, who

knew every place in the world, I believe. "And these are the people who cram for foreign debates, and take upon themselves to speak up for commerce and its interests. Ask him whether there will be a good supply of humming-birds from Odessa this year."

But this I would not venture, though I do think he would have answered, vaguely, that the official accounts could hardly be depended upon, or something of that kind. He favoured me, during dinner, with an outline of the course he intends to take in Parliament. I should misuse his technical words, but their effect was that he intended to have our foreign policy entirely remodelled, and that no despatch of any kind should ever be sent to anybody until the sense of the House had been taken upon it. He should take his Atlas down to the House—

"One step in the right direction," murmured my neighbour. "Another would be to begin to study it."

And he should say to the Foreign Secretary, "Now, either Sicily (for example) *is* an island or it is *not* an island. If it *is* an island—"

"It is a piece of land surrounded by water," said the City gentleman, aloud. "You wont im-

peach the poor Minister if he answers so, sir, will you?"

"Sir," retorted Mr. Glimmer, "if our constituents treat such matters lightly, it is for us to set them a better example."

"Evaded my question, by Jupiter," muttered the old gentleman to a piece of preserved ginger. "Be hanged if I think he knows a niland from a nismus."

Just before the ladies retired, Mr. Glimmer got a more general audience, and declared, very frankly, that if he lived through the session, we should see some new leaves turned over in the Government book. He had pledged himself to reduce the national expenses one half, to regulate the taxation so that nobody would feel it, even if it were doubled, and to compress the whole of the laws into a code which should not be larger than the "Handbook of Etiquette." These were trifles, some of which he was aware had been already promised by several candidates, including members of the Government, but these were only stepping-stones to what he meant to effect. He should throw the national debt upon the East India Company's shoulders, confiscate the railways to the use of the nation, sell all the colonies by auction, and enact that every child,

born after next New Year's day, should be sent out as an emigrant as soon as it could walk. But this last proposition caused rather a sensation among the ladies, and before Mr. Glimmer could defend his views, Aunt Ratchet got us away—my city neighbour growling (as he handed me a handkerchief I had dropped):

"By George—I trust the Bottle-holder will have one chance—just one—of illuminating your friend."

The great statesman had been a bottle-holder himself before he joined us, and when he came up, his political ardour had been a little drowned in some wonderful Madeira of papa's, which "went out" in 1816—the year, Mr. Murkie Glimmer insisted, of the Battle of Waterloo. I hardly know whether anything that might have been said downstairs about me had opened his light-coloured eyes to my merits, or whether, as is more likely, papa had talked so cleverly that Mr. Glimmer had been charmed with the idea of a connection with somebody who could give him so many new ideas. At any rate, he was "marked in his attentions," as the books say, and after several calls, none of which found us at home, he sent a formal declaration of his sentiments, as regarded myself.

Now, if Mr. Glimmer should not be unseated

on petition—papa says he will—and make a brilliant figure in the House of Commons. If, while the eyes of the nation are watching him with eagerness, a most important debate should come on, and while parties, balanced to a nicety, are wild with excitement, a splendid speech from Mr. Glimmer should turn the scale. If ministers should resign, and their successors should instantly secure Mr. Glimmer as one of their secretaries of State. If, after a brief period, during which the duties of his office should be discharged more superbly than was conceivable, the Queen and the country should unite in calling upon Mr., or, more pleasantly, the Marquis Glimmer, to take the whole destinies of the country into his hands, and he should kiss those of his sovereign on his becoming Premier of England. If Lord Glimmer, having for years made his own country happy and prosperous, and defied or conciliated all the other kingdoms of the world, should be created Duke of Glimmer, with a pension of half a million for himself and his heirs for ever—if all these things should happen, Mr. Glimmer will not be surprised, for he is not of a nature to be surprised at any recognition of his own marvellous merits. Indeed, something of this kind is the future to which he considers

he has a right to look. But though he may not be surprised, I know who will—and that is the young lady whose papa, at her request, declined her chance of becoming Duchess of Glimmer, regulating dynasties, and compelling bishops to speak Quakerly English.

CHAPTER XVI.

"HERE break we off," said papa one morning, as we were walking a little way out of Brighton. "I shall go and take my bath at Brill's, and Aunt Ratchet and Daughter Violet can prolong their walk according to their own unexceptionable discretion. Only, Miss Brompton, don't let your evident determination to reach Beechy Head make you too late for lunch."

We bid him good bye, and he went back for his bath, and an angle of the road quickly placed us out of sight of each other. In a minute—it could not have been more—I heard a hasty step close behind us, and looking back, I saw a gentleman, who instantly raised his hat. I did not recognise him, but thought at the moment that one of us had perhaps dropped something, which the stranger had picked up.

"Your papa, there, desired that I should overtake you, Miss Brompton, and your aunt, and

introduce myself," he said, in an exceedingly soft voice. "He declared he would not be stopped from going to Brill's. Allow me, therefore, to present to you, Prince Charles Nicholas Wolgarowkowitch."

"O, indeed," said Aunty Ratchet, which perhaps, upon the whole, was as sensible an answer as could have been made under the circumstances. "Are you walking our way, sir?"

"Unquestionably," said the Prince, again raising his hat. He was a rather tall, middle-aged person, with strongly-marked features, which had been handsome, but looked very much worn and haggard. His black hair was scanty, and dashed with grey. He was dressed in black, and the only white he exhibited was a high but rather rough-edged collar. He wore dark gloves, and a small brooch with which the long ends of his cravat were connected was of jet. He had also a black cane. His manner was very elaborate, but this I concluded was a foreign symptom.

"I believe, Miss Brompton," he said, by way of commencing the conversation, "that your father is the very best man in the world."

Now, as privately I might have entertained some such idea myself, I only answered that papa was

indeed fortunate in securing the kind regards of a great many people.

"Ah," replied the Prince Charles Nicholas; "but some of them are ignorant wretches, others are worthless donkeys, others again are malignant idiots, while a fourth class may be considered as thankless pigs."

He arranged this classification of our acquaintances so rapidly that I had no time to sort them under the different heads, and he hurried on—

"Not one of them would give him a cup of cold water—not one. They're not like me, not they."

Aunty Ratchet here looked across me at the Prince in such a funny way, that I concluded she was trying to make up her mind whether the circumstance last mentioned was an advantage or not.

"No, Miss Brompton, no," he continued, "I am a spirit of another sort. Your father saved my life, and though I do not set it at a pin's fee, I mean to be as grateful as if I did. I have returned from Russia expressly for the purpose. The Emperor refused me my passports, or I should have been here sooner."

It just then occurred to me that the Prince spoke our language with great facility, and without any foreign accent; but I remembered that Rus-

sians are celebrated for what I have seen called "the servile power of acquiring foreign languages."

"You came from St. Petersburg?" I asked, by way of saying something.

"I did," he said, as if catching at the suggestion. "From St. Petersburg. A fine city, built by Peter the Great. A truly great man, Peter. Some people said he was a little cracked, but people always say that of everybody who is in earnest in an age of indifference. Yes, I came from St. Petersburg. I came for the purpose of seeing your father, my benefactor."

"It is odd that he should never have mentioned your name to me," I said.

"Not at all," he said, "I bound him by a tremendous vow never to mention it until I gave him leave. I have now given him that leave, and he may take the biggest speaking-trumpet he can buy for money, and climb to the very top of Mont Blanc, and thence proclaim to earth and seas the name of Charles Nicholas Wolgarowkowitch."

I could not help laughing to think of my dear, quiet, composed papa performing such a feat. He looked hard at me.

"Of course, I speak symbolically," he said,

"and not by the card. You quite understand that I speak symbolically?"

"I imagined so," I said. "Don't you begin to feel tired, Aunty dear?"

"Not a bit, child," replied the stupid, honest, truthful old darling, instead of turning round towards Brighton.

"Now," said the Prince, "I will tell you what your father did for me, and you shall then judge whether I ought not to be grateful. You are aware that in Russia we all engage in trade. Excellent well, I was a fishmonger. On a gigantic scale, of course. I had eight thousand men fishing for me every night, and any one who failed to bring me one hundred pounds of fish in the morning, was immediately knouted to death. Excuse these trivial details. Upon one occasion, a fisherman in my service hooked a tremendous sturgeon, so large, that it pulled him and four of his companions out of the boat: indeed, they were all drowned, which is of no consequence in my narrative. The fish was captured, and when brought into my palace, it reached from end to end of my principal ball-room."

"Bless me, Sir! do you have fish brought into your ball-rooms, in Russia?" asked matter-of-fact Aunt Ratchet.

"Excuse the jest," replied the Prince; "but why not one sturgeon where there were so many pairs of soles?" And he evidently waited for a laugh; but as none came, he went on.

"I had been giving a splendid *fête* to all the nobility, gentry, and clergy of my province, and I astonished them by bringing in my big fish in the middle of a general mazourka. It was the largest fish of the kind ever seen; and, as I need not tell you, we made caviare from sturgeon-roe, I anticipated a large profit. But some of my guests, envious at my good fortune, informed the Czar. The Father of his people immediately demanded my fish."

"Well, the first message I evaded, by causing the courier to be thrown down a precipice. The second I also eluded: my faithful vassals disposing of the messenger—I never asked how, or for the money found on the body. But then the Czar, in a rage, dispatched General Rubleskoff, with orders to bring both me and my fish to the capital; and there's no playing with the military in Russia. I sent my 'caviare to the General,' and surrendered myself prisoner. The Emperor ordered that I should be thrown into the Neva. The Emperor was obeyed."

"But you were not drowned, Sir?" said Aunty,

who was beginning to take an intense interest in the narrative, and always liked to know "whether the executioner got his money."

"Madam, I will not contradict you. But it would have been my painful duty to do so, but for the fact that this young lady's father, then a young man, who was cruising in his yacht on the river in question, hooked me out with a boat-hook, and in defiance of the Czar and all his cannon, set sail, and carried me clean out of the country."

"Papa own a yacht! Papa visit Russia!" And I began to have some strange misgivings; and this time it was I who was tired, and I would turn for Brighton.

"Most true," said the Prince. "For years I dared not return to my native land; and I lived at Peckham Rye, upon your father's bounty. At last the Emperor died."

"Which Emperor?" I asked hastily.

"The Emperor Paul," replied the Prince, without the least discomposure. O how I looked up and down, then; but there was not a single person in sight.

"And he being succeeded by the present man, Nicholas, (who always liked me and never liked caviare,) I went back, regained my estate,

which had trebled its value, and I now stand here, the richest subject of the Czar, come over to England to show his gratitude to his preserver."

I knew that Aunt's historical information would not make her critical, and I was hardly surprised to hear her say—

"I never heard of this, sir; but your feelings do you credit."

"But Brompton—my old friend—makes no allowances for them, and will accept nothing at my hands," said his Highness mournfully. "I have offered him diamonds, roubles, slaves—all in vain. But I have at last hit upon a scheme, and one which cannot fail."

"And what may that be, sir?" said poor Aunt.

"I shall make his lovely daughter, here, the Princess Wolgarowkowitch," said the Prince in a determined voice. "I endow her with two provinces, one million of peasants, three pints and a-half of diamonds, a mountain of malachite, an ice palace, a menagerie of bears, and myself. Does the prospect please you, lovely Violet, and will you be content to bloom in the shade of the Uralian mountains? I pause for a reply."

And the Prince took off his hat and fell down on his knees before us.

Before we could make up our minds whether to scream or to run, and while we were perhaps thinking of combining those defences, I suddenly saw my Brighton riding-master cantering up at the head of about twenty pretty pupils. The cavalry saved us.

The Prince sprang to his feet, and in a respectful, and I may say, humble voice, said—

"It is time the curtain should fall on the farce; but I will hope for pardon and approbation from a gracious public. If, ladies, the little romance, with which I have sought to beguile your hour of leisure, has afforded you any amusement—my benefit (and he pulled out some yellow cards) is fixed at the theatre, here, for the 15th. I have a large and hungry family, and in their names I would solicit you to take a few tickets. Shall I appeal in vain?"

"And you are no Prince? and you don't know Mr. Brompton?" asked Aunt Ratchet with much indignation.

"I know not which is the greater misfortune," said the poor actor, "but both are mine. I accidentally overheard your parting, and Necessity whipped up her child, Invention, to do the rest."

"But you have a large and hungry family?"

I *knew* the woman would go and say that directly, and, moreover, buy two tickets, like a dear old goose as she is. And I am no better: for when I saw how thankfully the Prince looked at the half-crowns, I must make her take two more tickets for the Princess Wolgarowkowitch.

CHAPTER XVII.

I CERTAINLY will persuade my dear Aunty Ratchet to go out to the Diggings, before she gets me into any more disagreeablenesses. Those Gittingses again! I know that everything has its use in the order of nature, but I do not understand what Gittingses are for.

Papa sent us into the city, in the brougham, that we might leave some papers, which he said were important, at the Fireside and Circumnavigating Life Assurance Office. Having left them, Aunty must needs go to Birch's for a "warm jelly," which she has an old world conviction can be got nowhere else in London. While she was enjoying her jelly (which I thought was a little out of season on a hot day in August), I was amused at seeing dreadfully stern old men, great, huge, Scotch merchants, keen-eyed stock-brokers, and all kinds of pushing and overbearing people, perpetually coming in and darting at penny tarts,

like schoolboys, and looking greedily at what others were eating.

"Well, I *will* be flopjisticated," cried a loud, laughing voice behind me. And I, and indeed everybody in the shop, turned to see what sort of an operation was going to be performed. To my dismay, a little round red man, in a blue coat and brass buttons, and such a flaming waistcoat, pushed his way up to Aunty.

"Mrs. Ratchet come into the city again! Wonders will never cease." And he added something about a sight of Aunt being serviceable in an ophthalmia case.

"Luckiest chance in the world," he went on. "I'd 'a given a tenner rather than not have looked in here. You know the gal's married, our Meg—spliced to Sam Point?"

"Lor, Violet, my dear," said Aunt, looking at me. "Do you hear that?"

"O, this is Violet, my dear, is it?" said the gentleman, who of course was Mr. Gittings of Rotherhithe. "I've heard of Miss Violet, rather," and he looked elaborately sly. "So have some other folks—a certain crow was plucked a good many times with Master Sam, I can tell you. Tried to take the wind out of Meg's sails a little,

eh? Well, all fair among girls—no harm done—she only laughs at it now."

I, I, Violet Brompton—accused of trying to supplant Miss Margaret Gittings in the affections of Mr. Samuel Point! Was not I a good girl not to flash my eyes at him, but to answer civilly, and indeed laughing, that there was some little mistake, and that I was sincerely glad to hear that the wedding had taken place? *Was* I not a good girl, I keep asking?

"Well, that's said very kindly, and I am sure sincerely," answered Mr. Gittings. "And to show it is sincere, we'll all go up and see Meg. It's close by, in a street just out of Finsbury Circus. I know she's in, and she'll take it deuced kind."

"I *should* like to see her now she's settled," said dear Aunty, who has all an old woman's funny hankering to examine a young woman's *ménage*. What was I to say? We went to pay the wedding visit.

We found Mrs. Sam Point in a comfortable little house, in which everything looked new and showy, and as the blinds were drawn up to the very top, and the curtains pulled back almost into ropes, we had the full sunlight upon each article. But Margaret's red cheeks defied the sunshine,

and she looked as petulant and self-willed as ever. Stiff, cheap portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Point (he in the celebrated red cravat, and she in red satin, with two colossal brooches) already stared from the wall. She received me very graciously—I really believe she thought that there had been a *lutte*, and that she was victor. Wine and cake were handed and Aunty Rachet made a little set speech, wishing the young couple (Mr. Sam was absent) "all the happiness they could wish for themselves." And, as it seemed to be expected, I ventured a humble echo of Aunty.

"Bears no malice, you see, Meg," said the abominable Mr. Gittings. I was not so sure of the fact, at that moment.

Several people came in, and they were all introduced to us. Three or four girls, rather pretty, were among them, but they were difficult to talk to, being a little *clique*, and when one made the commonest observation, they would look at one another, and laugh, as if one's words reminded them of some secret joke. And they talked a good deal among themselves about certain Toms and Johns, and were generally mysterious. At last, Mr. Ferdinand Swink was announced, and his name created a sensation. Miss Jarvis (I think) seized Miss Bowker (I think) by the arm,

squeezed her, and made a face like that of a child when it intends to denote extreme ecstacy.

"Clever young man, pleasing writer, very superior person," said one of the elder ladies.

"Not a bit," cried Miss Jarvis, "he's good for nothing. Now Ferdinand," she exclaimed, as the gentleman entered, "I have been abusing you, so come and sit on this footstool by me, and defend yourself."

"Worth while, I should say, considering my assailant," returned Mr. Swink, civilly. He looked hard at me as a new member of the circle, and then at Mrs. Samuel for an introduction. But she did not respond. I fancy I saw one of the girls make a sign to her not to do so. Mr. Swink, however—rather a good-looking person, over-dressed, and with a familiar manner, which I suppose passes in his world for careless ease—was not to be discomfited.

"I like to know everybody, Mrs. Point. Will you introduce me?"

"Mr. Swink, Miss Brompton," said Margaret, with the worst grace in the world.

"Magic words," said Mr. Swink, dropping himself heavily upon the sofa close by me, and leaning himself back. "The *Open Sesame* of society.

Now, girls, what have you got to say to amuse me?"

"Well, I never!" said Miss Jarvis. "Why don't you amuse us? What have you been writing lately, you idle creature?"

"Nothing you would understand," replied the courteous author.

"A great writer, that, next you, Miss Violet," said Mr. Gittings.

"Indeed," I said, with great politeness. "May I ask in what department——"

"There," snapped Miss Jarvis, "you see Miss Brompton has never even heard of your name. I always told you that you never wrote, except for rubbishing magazines that nobody reads."

The author looked so sincerely annoyed at this smart sally, that I determined to relieve him.

"So many of our best writers are anonymous," I suggested; "newspapers and periodicals employing so much talent, that one may be ignorant of the name of an author to whom one is constantly indebted."

"Just so," said Mr. Swink, catching at the idea. "And," he added, confidentially, "one does not always think it necessary to mention everything one does."

"O, of course," said Miss Jarvis, "now that

notion is put into his head, he will go about hinting that he writes the whole of the *Times* every morning before breakfast."

This style of repartee seemed popular, and we had a good deal more of it. But at last Mr. Swink, who listened very attentively to the little I said—they fought too hard for me—appeared to discover, for the first time in his life, that there must be circles in which people can talk without snapping at one another's words, and "catching one another up." He made not the slightest scruple of affording his friends the benefit of his discovery, and by no means softened the mode of conveying it.

"By Jove!" he said, when Miss Jarvis had given him what the other young ladies called a regular set down, "What a blessing it is to hear somebody speak without trying to be witty. Miss Brompton, whom I never met before, has talked more sense in half-an-hour than you girls in all your lives."

"There's praise for you, Miss Violet," said Mr. Gittings. "You ought to be proud of that."

"The new face always has *him*. We know him," remarked Miss Jarvis.

"You talk disgusting nonsense," replied the author, getting very red, and quite forgetting any

good manners he might ever have had. The girls quite screamed.

"There's earnestness," cried Miss Bowker. "The young lady has made an impression, that's clear; and had better prepare herself for the worst."

"She might do much worse than listen to my friend Swink," said the premature Mr. Gittings. I suppose he thought he owed me a helping hand, in consequence of my losing Mr. Point to Margaret.

"See how he colours up!" cried Miss Jarvis. "Why not make the offer at once, Ferdinand? So famous a man as you has only to ask. What do you say, Mrs. Point?"

"I dare say Miss Violet will give him every encouragement," said Margaret, spitefully.

"What does Miss Brompton say to that?" asked Mr. Ferdinand, I really believe a great deal more in earnest than in joke.

"O, Miss Brompton means to take very good care whom she encourages—for the future," was that young lady's reply, given with a smile, and the least look in the world at Mrs. Samuel Point. She was in capital order for taking the slightest hint, and her red cheeks instantly lighted up with a brilliant illumination.

"Before people talk of encouraging," she sniffed out, "they should be sure that other people desire anything of the sort."

"You used the word first, Mrs. Point," said the author, who began to take a tender interest in me, and would not see me ill-treated.

"I suppose I am at liberty to use any word I please," returned Mrs. Margaret, "without being responsible to Mr. Ferdinand Swink?"

In short, that little speech of mine—and really I think she drew it on herself—made Mrs. Samuel so fierce, that the *séance* became quite uncomfortable; and I was so glad when Aunty was quite satisfied with the immense amount of information she had elicited from the married ladies about their children's teethings, forwardness, fat legs, hooping-coughs, and willingness to take grey powders. What in the world was it all to that tiresome old creature?

Mr. Swink sent me, for a long time, cuttings of country newspapers, pages from magazines, and other specimens of his genius, but I never took any notice of them; and finally he discontinued the practice, and married Miss Jarvis.

CHAPTER XVIII. AND LAST.

"REFERRING to the letter (as official people say —mention the fact to your husband) which I did myself the pleasure of writing to you, Mrs. Violet Swellington, some six months since, touching the publication of the memoirs of your going-to-be-married life, I am inclined, rather, to suggest that you might begin to consider your revelations as sufficiently expansive. Moreover, my distinguished child, Parliament is shortly to meet, and the new Member for Pocketburgh will require all your affectionate attentions during the hours that illustrious senator can spare from his preparatory course of Mill, Hallam, and Dod's Handbook of Parliamentary Etiquette. So, if you think—and so forth, why—*et cetera.*"

In obedience to papa's hint, for he is always right, I have arrived at the end of the series of chapters dear *Mr. Punch* was so good as to say he should be happy to receive as long as Miss Violet

thought proper to write them. But I have a world of things to tell in a short space, and how I shall manage it I do not know. The bit from papa's letter will, however, let everybody into two great secrets. And how certain events came about, so suddenly and yet so pleasantly, shall be told by another person. He is to be a great speaker, and he shall begin by speaking for me. Here is part of a letter which he wrote me. Of course, I have not copied out any of the expressions which are, I believe, customary in such cases, and which, though the young gentleman is supposed to use them with sincerity, and the young lady to read them with pleasure, always make third parties laugh. Now, a Member of Parliament must not be laughed at.

"POCKETBURGH, *Thursday.*

"My DEAREST VIOLET,

* * * * * *

"I am the Member for this place, at least as much to my own astonishment as anybody else's, but never mind that—it is a great fact—Albany Swellington, M.P., addresses you.

"There's a banquet to-morrow, or I should be up by express train to-night, and with your papa before breakfast to-morrow. But I have written to him by this post;—my invaluable friend,

Zachary Kingsilver, the old conveyancer, in whose chambers I have been reading so hard, and who has done me such essential service, advised me to write. Not that I wanted any advice to do *that*, for * * * * * *

* * * * * *

"Kingsilver came down at the request of the Earl of Machicollation, the owner of this borough, to discuss some alterations the Earl wanted to make in the arrangement of his property, in consequence of his eldest son, Lord Portcullis, having changed his mind about a marriage, and the Honourable Mr. Donjonkeep, the second son, having turned restive in political matters. *Entre nous*, Don John, as we call him in the Mediterranean, is in love with a girl in the Ministry (her father is, I mean), and love, you know, or I hope you know, is * * * *

* * * * * *

(*These stars represent five pages of really very beautiful writing.*)

"Well, old Zachary asked me to come down with him, and I was only too glad to show him any attention. I went to the hotel in the town, and he proceeded to Frowningdown Castle. We learned, on arriving last Monday, that the nomination for the borough was fixed for yesterday, and of course

all the old canvassing and speechifying work was going on, work in which I did my part some time ago for Mumble Fitzplumb, who stuck in his maiden speech, and fainted into his hat. So I was quite at home, and in other days I should have found out some fellow I knew—or knew his cousin, or his yacht, or discovered some other basis of friendship—and should have plunged into the fun: but I have grown sage, and I thought I might make things awkward at the Castle for Zachary, if I went ahead without quite comprehending how parties stood. So I shut myself up till Zach. should return, and read De Lolme on the Constitution as well as I could for the riot the drunken constituents were making all over the house. And though the situation was not the best for such thoughts, I sat considering whether * * * *

* * * * * * *

"Suddenly Mr. Kingsilver came into my room in a great hurry, took the book out of my hands, and pointed impatiently to my hat and gloves. I knew his way too well to be surprised, and in three minutes we were in a carriage with the Machicollation arms on it, hastening to the Castle.

"'Old Brompton (he meant your admirable papa, love) says you can speak very well. You

ain't hoarse, to-day, I hope,' said Mr. Kingsilver, who was blinking with his eyes, and pulling at his nose in a most impatient manner. 'I *say*,' he said, after a pause, during which I was puzzling at his meaning; 'I *say*,' he added, most earnestly, 'give it well in about moderate reforms, and hit hard at the ecclesiastical courts—they've no friends. I don't see that you should commit yourself to much.'

"I was still staring, when the Castle horses, which had stept out splendidly, rattled us over a paved court-yard, and Zachary would hardly wait for the door being opened before tumbling out and pulling me with him through a gloomy hall, and into a grim old library (haunted I'm certain), and then he stamped because no one was there, and rang the bell vehemently.

"'Where's the Earl?'

"'Haddressing the folks in the juiced yard, sir,' said the servant.

"'Old fool,' I could hear Zach. mutter, and perhaps he even put the sentiment a trifle stronger. 'Come on, Albany, can't you?'

"Through the Castle, and into the joust-yard we hurried, and there we found long tables in the open air, and perhaps a couple of hundred men, tenants of the Earl, banging the tables furiously,

while the lord of Machicollation was haranguing them. Oh, Violet! what rubbish the old fellow was saying; but his fine head, white hair, and soldierly manner, helped it wonderfully.

"'Take him easy,' said Mr. Kingsilver to me, still bringing me on towards the Earl. 'Say something about Portcullis's legs, however.'

"'What's the matter with his legs, except that one's as handy as the other?' I asked; for I remembered the Viscount in France. He used to pester poor Dominique, at the *Café de Paris* by inventing wild-sounding dishes—such as *Œillades de Locofoco* (*vert*) *aux catafalques anabaptistes*, and nonsense of that kind.

"'Accident—railway—no chance of taking his seat, all our men *must* be up for the first field night, and the trial of strength. So you are to be returned with Globber, the other candidate; I've made it all right. There'll be a contest, but you're both safe—there's a clear majority cheering the old pump now. O, he's done. Now make your bow.'

"The old Earl came forward, and welcomed me with a sort of stately cordiality by no means out of keeping with the whole scene. He paid me some gracious compliments, hoped that our acquaintance would be long and intimate, and

presented me to the assembly as the gentleman of whom he had been speaking.

"'You *know*, gentlemen,' he said in such a sonorous voice, and with such a frank smile, that the humbug really seemed all right, 'that I never presume to dictate to my tenantry, or to interfere in their elections, beyond taking that interest which a friend must take in his friend's affairs. But I own it would console me much under the painful circumstances which for the present exclude my son, Viscount Portcullis, from Parliament, should your free and unbiassed choice fall upon Mr. Albany Swellington.'

"I suppose, dearest Violet, that a man has his moments of inspiration. My thoughts rushed to you, and * * * I seemed suddenly to comprehend my exact position, and, stimulated * * *, the words came. Being moderately reformed myself, I spoke as became a moderate reformer—in an Earl's joust-yard—and I delivered an enormous speech, which, as Lord Machicollation and old Kingsilver looked evidently delighted, and the tenantry shouted applause, must have been about the right thing to say. The nomination took place yesterday, and there was a great fight round the hustings, and a dashing charge of mounted farmers—the hospital is full of the wounded and

bruised. To-day we have had the poll—a fierce struggle: the quarrymen came down from the hills with iron bars to smash the Earl's men, and the miners came up from the shafts, with loaded bludgeons, to demolish the anti-Castleites. Patriotism ran so high at last that we had to send off for light dragoons. However, at the close, the numbers were

Jerningham Globber.	203
Albany Swellington	201
Snitch Chawler.	182
Glorious majority for Swellington over Chawler	19

I have only waited for the exact numbers to write to you. And now, dearest Violet, a new field has been opened to me. But I have one thought only, namely, that my success may be a stepping-stone to * * * "

And that is nearly all I have to say. Dear Albany made a beautiful speech at the banquet, and introduced an allusion to "bright eyes," which the provincial ladies thought they understood, but which was better appreciated by somebody else who read it to her papa from the *Pocketburgh Herald.* And then the new member came to town, and had a not very long, but I think a

very satisfactory interview with papa, with whom, by a curious coincidence, Mr. Kingsilver (a dear old man, though odd) had been closeted for some time. Miss Violet was also requested to join the council, and various questions were discussed, but few differences of opinion arose. Only one point Albany urged, and, whatever I may have said, I thought his arguments were proper and forcible. He represented that as he should wish to devote much time to the study of the questions likely to arise in Parliament, it would be well that all other matters should be disposed of as speedily as possible, so that his mind might be in the calm condition desirable in the case of a statesman. Papa remarked, that if he had one quality more than another largely developed, it was patriotism, and for the sake of his country he assented to Albany's proposition; and Mr. Kingsilver concurring, and promising early parchments, Miss Violet was requested to appoint her wedding-day —and did.

THE END.

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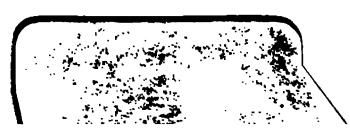
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